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Bombing to Surrender
*The Contribution of Airpower
to the Collapse of Italy, 1943*

PHILIP A. SMITH, MAJOR, USAF
School of Advanced Airpower Studies

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Contents

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
	DISCLAIMER	ii
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABOUT THE AUTHOR	vii
	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	AN UNEXAMINED VICTORY	3
3	WHEN GIANTS WALKED THE EARTH	7
4	A TALE OF TWO TIGERS	19
5	WHEN IN ROME	37
6	THE DENOUEMENT OF DEFEAT	57
7	NO CROWING FOR A NEW DAWN	71

Illustrations

<i>Figure</i>		
1	Pantelleria after Aerial Bombardment (Photo)	21
2	Rome after Aerial Bombardment (Photo)	40

<i>Table</i>		
1	First Rome Raid Summary	39

<i>Map</i>		
1	Central Mediterranean	27
2	Targets and Sensitive Areas in Rome	41
3	Enlargement of Central Rome	42
4	Daylight Precision Bombing, Littorio Marshaling Yards	43

Abstract

Throughout this first century of airpower, military theorists have proposed numerous schemes as the best use of airpower. Airmen of many nations tried and tested these theories in wars large and small, and they have learned, ignored, or forgotten many lessons. Of the four major coercive mechanisms available to airpower—punishment, risk, military denial, and decapitation—Robert Pape in *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* concludes that military denial is the best use of airpower. Furthermore, Pape argues that recent technological advances only enhance the military denial mechanism. In his appendix, Pape categorizes the Italian example as another case of successful military denial.

This study examines the collapse of Italy in 1943 and the contribution of airpower to this collapse. Several broad works, often citing Ernest R. May in *Lessons of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*, claim that airpower decisively caused the Italian surrender, but do not indisputably argue this point nor do they define the coercive mechanism(s) airpower employed to achieve this result. Studies such as the *United States Strategic Bombing Survey* or that of the British Bombing Survey Unit largely ignore Italy or in the case of Franklin William Deakin's *The Brutal Friendship* cite coalition politics as the primary cause of Italy's surrender.

This study reveals how airpower made four contributions to the collapse of Italy. First, airpower shaped the grand strategy of the western Allied powers in 1943. The Americans preferred to wage an air campaign to destroy German industry while using the direct approach of a cross-channel invasion to defeat Germany. Under the leadership of Winston S. Churchill, the strong British preference for an indirect strategy aimed at the "soft-underbelly" of Europe, as well as the belief in the efficacy of airpower to cause the Italian surrender through "morale bombing," artfully maneuvered the United States into waging a prolonged campaign in Africa and the Mediterranean.

Second, mainland attacks against rail marshaling yards, ports, and airfields did indirectly contribute militarily to Operations Husky and Avalanche. The destruction of six key rail nodes was part of an overall interdictive campaign to prevent reinforcements and supplies from reaching first Sicily in support of Husky and then southern Italy in support of Avalanche. The San Lorenzo marshaling yards in Rome, however, was not one of these six key nodes. Additionally, in both Husky and Avalanche, Allied forces enjoyed unprecedented air superiority, which resulted in the ability for strategic airpower to pursue operations other than the direct or indirect support of ground operations.

Third, both American and British strategic bombing contributed to the psychological decapitation and fall of the Fascist government on 25 July 1943. In a meeting with Adolph Hitler on 19 July, Benito Mussolini failed to obtain German military aid—especially the desperately needed 2,000 fighters. Significantly, the first

air raid on Rome by more than 540 bombers, the largest air raid in history to date, interrupted the meeting. This air raid also convinced the Italian king, a majority of Fascist leaders, and the pope that Italy must get out of the war. A stunned Mussolini called for a meeting of his Grand Council of Fascism for 24 July, where he allowed, in the early hours of the 25th, Fascist leaders to pass a motion to remove him from command of military forces. Later that day, the king, again in command of the army, arrested a docile, "psychologically decapitated" Mussolini in a bloodless coup d'etat.

Finally, airpower coerced and aided the interim Marshal Pietro Badoglio's government to surrender unconditionally and escape to the Allies on 9 September. Appointed by the king, Badoglio quickly sent civilian representatives to Lisbon to negotiate a conditional surrender to the Allies, despite the mounting German occupation of Italy. The threat of and actual second Rome air raid resulted in the first direct contact between Badoglio's military representatives and the Allies in order to declare Rome an open city. Meeting with Eisenhower's staff in Sicily, these Italian military representatives were coercively induced to surrender unconditionally. After the armistice, Badoglio and the royal family, aided by Rome's status, managed to escape German capture and join the Allies.

In an era of clean conflict, both painless and quick, leaders and airman downplay the psychological effects of airpower—with the exception of the questionable negative effects of casualties on the democracies. Operation Desert Storm typifies both these effects. Furthermore, attrition-based computer war-game simulations largely ignore the human element. The collapse of Italy serves as one example where the psychological effects of airpower outweighed the physical damage caused by bombing.

About the Author

Maj Philip A. Smith (BS, University of Arizona; MAS, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) received a regular commission as a distinguished graduate from the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, University of Arizona in 1984. After graduation from undergraduate pilot training at Reese Air Force Base (AFB), Texas, in 1985, his first assignment was as a forward air controller/battalion air liaison officer flying OV-10s at George AFB, California. He subsequently flew F-111s at Royal Air Force Lakenheath and Upper Heyford from 1990 to 1993, flying 31 missions in support of Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm and 17 missions in support of Operation Provide Comfort. After returning to the United States, Major Smith flew the F-117 from 1993 to 1995. As a senior pilot with 2,600 hours, he has been awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal, and three Air Medals. He is a graduate of National Security and Strategic Studies, Naval War College, Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, College of Naval Command and Staff College, and the School of Advanced Airpower Studies in 1997. In July 1997, he was reassigned to Headquarters Air Force, Strategy Division, chief of Fighter Branch at the Pentagon. Major Smith married the former Julia Richardson and they have two daughters, Cassandra and Kylie.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Aerospace doctrine is, simply defined, what we hold true about aerospace power and the best way to do the job in the Air Force. It is based on experience, our own and that of others. Doctrine is what we have learned about aerospace power and its application since the dawn of powered flight. While history does not provide specific formulas that can be applied without modification to present and future situations, it does provide the broad conceptual basis for our understanding of war, human nature, and aerospace power. . . . It is the starting point for solving contemporary problems.

—Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace
Doctrine of the United States Air Force*

In examining any military strategy, it is impossible not to discuss military doctrine. Discussing doctrine, specifically its definition and application, leads to passionate debates. Among military professionals of various services and learned academicians of many institutions, even the definition of doctrine differs by degrees in both its fundamental purpose and application of the military instrument of national policy. Since this is a study largely about competing airpower strategies during World War II, I present my own view of this 50-year-old debate.

My definition of airpower doctrine comes in two divisions of the classic “who, what, where, when, why, and how.” The organizational doctrinal division is the “why, who, and what” form of doctrine which involves service roles and missions and thus force structure. The employment doctrinal division is the “where and how” form of doctrine which is the art of how the resultant military organization achieves its objectives, although there is an interaction between these two divisions. In peace, questions about the first doctrinal division generally seem to overshadow those of the second division. In war, the reverse is true as the challenges and experiences of war change the repertoire of the military practitioners. However, this is not always the case—especially for air forces. Because of the infancy of flight and tempo of technological change, new employment doctrine can precede changes in organizational doctrine. As an example, consider the development of strategic bombing doctrine prior to World War II. Visionaries such as Giulio Douhet—who believed the independent air force bombing enemy cities could break the will of an adversary—competed with concepts from the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS), which believed victory could be achieved by destroying critical production centers of an industrialized nation at war—later popularized in the Disney movie, *Victory through Airpower*.

Nevertheless, the visions of both Douhet and ACTS saw the need for the development of an entirely new weapon system, a large four-engine bomber, a flying fortress, to perform strategic bombing. In the American case, this new war-winning employment doctrine, in turn, led to the call for a new organization, the United States (US) Air Force. In the test of total war, neither strategic doctrine was as decisive as envisioned. More than 50 years of experience later, the doctrine and efficacy of strategic airpower is still a matter of debate.

In contrast, military and civilian professionals argue today that airpower is no longer an infant and the experiences over the last century are enough to indicate that strategic airpower does not exist and that employing a military denial strategy is the only appropriate employment doctrine for airpower. In a time of peace and surety of American military power, such an absolute proposition for employment doctrine may again have important effects on organizational doctrine—just as it did 50 years ago. Alternative strategies should be just that, and organizational structures should permit their employment if the situation should dictate. This study does not offer another absolute ruling, nor does it represent a bias toward one form of employing airpower over another, but it does attempt to document an important exception to the most current “panacea” target.

Chapter 2

An Unexamined Victory

During the crisis of August 1990 through January 1991, a long parade of military experts and historians had trudged to Capitol Hill to warn senators and members of Congress that bombing merely stiffened an opponent's morale. Such obiter dicta took liberties with the historical record, but no one during that tense autumn had much interest in a careful review of the relevant scholarship.

—Eliot Cohen
Foreign Affairs 73

Before World War II, many enthusiasts promulgated aerial bombing as a war-winning weapon.¹ The Italian general Douhet believed an independent air force could break the morale of an enemy by destroying its cities through aerial bombardment.² British Air Marshal Hugh M. Trenchard “viewed the disruption of enemy industry as a legitimate means for bringing about the collapse of enemy morale.”³ Many early air leaders in the United States at the ACTS were convinced that attacking an enemy's vital centers would cripple any industrial nation's ability to produce war material, thus forcing capitulation.⁴ The notion that airpower could win wars and avoid the bloody stalemate of the Great War was attractive to civilian and military leaders alike.

During World War II, airpower rose to the challenge of its promise in many forms during the test of total war. While such continental powers as Germany and Russia focused more on the direct support of their ground forces, the western Allied powers attempted to bring about the collapse of their foes through strategic attack. Great Britain, for many reasons, among them the vulnerability and inaccuracy of its bombers, attempted night “morale bombing” against cities and sought to grind its adversaries into submission. The airmen from the United States, entering the war later, still believed their bombers were better armed and more accurate than those of their British counterparts. These beliefs, combined with ACTS teachings that aerial bombing would destroy the war-making potential of the enemy, led the US Army Air Forces (USAAF) to conduct “daylight precision bombing.” While not without effect, this aerial campaign against Germany and Japan, as recorded by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) and British Bombing Survey Unit (BBSU), did not achieve the level of decisiveness hoped for by prewar theorists and wartime civilian and military leaders.

Germany and Japan were the Allies' major adversaries in the European and Pacific theaters, and their defeat was the key to victory in their

respective theaters. But Germany and Japan were not the only Axis powers subjected to a strategic air campaign. However, the BBSU and the European report of the USSBS focused almost totally on Germany, the latter devoting five lines and contributing annotations on two bar graphs in the overall report to the operations against Italy. "Africa was cleared. The 'soft-underbelly' of the Axis lay open. The triumvirate—land, sea, and air—attacked it at Sicily, Sardinia, and Italy. The airfields of southern Italy were captured and the way opened for long-range bombers to reach over the Alps at southern Germany. In 1943, the emphasis again turned toward the north and the interrupted build up of our forces in England was resumed."⁵ The emphasis of the European report of the USSBS is the effect of airpower on the main opponent, Germany.

In contrast, several military historians emphasize the decisive contribution of strategic airpower to the collapse of Italy. For example, in the official Army Air Force history, historians Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate record that airpower partly contributed to the fall of Fascist Italy. "The downfall of Mussolini to which the Allied air raid on Rome on 19 July [1943] had contributed heavily, the accelerated progress of the Sicilian campaign, signs that Italy could not continue to prosecute the war, and that she was about ready to sue for peace."⁶

US Army historian Maurice Matloff was even more generous in 1953 when he stated that "the invasion of Sicily, accompanied by heavy bombing on the Italian mainland—especially of the marshaling yards in the Rome area on 19 July [1943]—dealt crushing blows to Italian morale and led directly to the overthrow of the Fascist regime."⁷

Although those military historians mention that the Sicilian campaign as well as the Rome bombing contributed to the fall of Italy, historian F. W. Deakin offers a third hypothesis for the collapse of Italy. In his 1963 work, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Italian Fascism*, Deakin closely examines the relationship between these two Fascist leaders and concluded that Benito Mussolini's failure to secure either war material or withdrawal from the war at a meeting with Adolph Hitler at Feltre on 19 July 1943 led to his removal by the Fascist Grand Council.⁸

In 1973, Ernest R. May, in *Lessons of the Past*, proposed that "bombing probably contributed to political settlements" in Italy and Japan and possibly Korea.⁹ May writes that King Victor Emmanuel deserted Mussolini because of the bombing, which led to a chain of events that ended in signing an armistice in September. He writes that "according to the King's closest confidant, Gen Paolo Puntoni, it was the bombing which precipitated these events."¹⁰ Many airpower detractors and pundits alike often cite this critical conclusion of May.

Ironically, Michael Sherry cited May's conclusion in *The Rise of American Airpower* as does Conrad C. Crane in *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, works which largely condemn strategic airpower for its lack of efficacy and morality.¹¹ In contrast, Stephen T. Hosmer, in a 1996 RAND study, *Psychological Effects of U.S. Air Operations in Four Wars, 1941–91*, cited May

as evidence that aerial bombing favorably contributes to psychological collapse of the enemy.¹² Finally, Stephen Harvey, writing in an article in *History* 70, notes the absence of the Italian air campaign from the USSBS and BBSU reports and concludes that "the defeat of Italy in 1943 provides an almost classic case study for the strategic impact of bombing and is perhaps the more deserving of study because it was, after all, General Douhet, who first promulgated the doctrine of the strategic use of airpower."¹³

Organization

This chapter provides a historical account of the contribution of strategic airpower to the collapse of Italy on three levels: Allied grand strategy, the morale effects of Allied bombardment, and the effect of the Rome raid. This study does not recreate the USSBS's or BBSU's depth of analyses for the Italian air campaign, which is an impossible task 50 years after the event. Nor does this study resolve any debate concerning the relative contributions of all the factors that led to the collapse of Italy in World War II.

Chapter 3 examines the contribution of airpower to the western Allied grand strategy. This case study emphasizes how airpower affected Allied coalition decision making and policy formulation. During the Casablanca, Trident, and Algiers conferences, the doctrinal debate between civilian political leaders and coalition military leaders concerning the efficacy of night morale bombing versus daylight precision bombing partly resulted in the focus of Allied bombing efforts to knock Italy out of the war. More important for this discussion, decisions made by the principals at these conferences directly led to the critical Rome bombing of 19 July 1943.

Next, as necessary background, chapter 4 describes the politics and major players in Fascist Italy during early World War II who attempted to cope with the pressures of war, which included Allied strategic bombing. Mussolini failed to cope with the twin dilemmas of domestic political and coalition management crises under the threat of increasingly powerful Allied military operations. He could not hold at bay the influences and desires of the pope, the king, the Fascist Party, and senior military leaders without invoking a vengeful occupation by Germany. Thus a doubly besieged Mussolini faced either simultaneous ground and air assault by the British and American empires or brutal occupation by its former alliance partner.

Chapter 5 describes the critical events in Rome from 19 July to 25 July 1943. On 19 July the two Fascist leaders met in a critical conference at the small village of Feltre. While being lectured by Hitler to not expect aid, Il Duce received a note that Rome was under heavy air attack by over 500 Allied bombers. These events created a crisis which culminated with a meeting of the Fascist Grand Council which deposed Mussolini and led to Il Duce's subsequent house arrest by King Emmanuel on 25 July 1943.

Chapter 6 brings events and details forward from 26 July through 9 September. During this period airpower continued to play a role in forcing

Marshal Pietro Badoglio's interim government to surrender. Despite the dangers of German occupation of most of the Italian peninsula, a second raid precipitated several events which precipitated the Italian armistice.

Chapter 7 examines the lessons learned by senior leaders and summarizes the Italian case, drawing general conclusions and implications about what the contributions of strategic attack might mean for the modern practitioners of airpower. Regardless of these implications and conclusions, the contribution of airpower to the collapse of Italy in 1943 deserves further analysis.

Notes

1. Eliot Cohen, "The Mystique of U.S. Airpower," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 1 (January-February 1994): 214.
2. Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, trans. Dino Ferrari (1942; new imprint, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983).
3. Phillip S. Meilinger, "Trenchard and Morale Bombing: The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine before World War II," *Journal of Military History*, April 1996, 269.
4. Muir S. Fairchild, "National Economic Structure," Air Corps Tactical School, Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB), Ala., 5 April 1938, 34.
5. *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Over-all Report (European War)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office [GPO], 30 September 1945), 3-7.
6. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2, *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943* (1949; new imprint, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 491-92.
7. Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, "Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942" (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953-1959), 151.
8. F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 411-12.
9. Ernest R. May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 128.
10. Ibid.
11. Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Airpower: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 144; and Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 94.
12. Stephen T. Hosmer, *Psychological Effects of U.S. Air Operations in Four Wars, 1941-1991: Lessons for U.S. Commanders* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), 15; and May, 128. Hosmer incorrectly paraphrases May when he writes "the Allied bombing of marshaling yards and industrial targets in the suburbs of Rome on July 10 [sic], 1943." In fact, the invasion of Sicily occurred on 10 July, while the Rome raid occurred "nine days later" as a "daylight precision bombing" attack on 19 July.
13. Stephen Harvey, "The Italian War Effort and the Strategic Bombing of Italy," *History* 70, 32-33. This article is cited in Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1995), 129. Original article was used for citations.

Chapter 3

When Giants Walked the Earth

On 28 October [1940], the day of the second encouraging clue that Hitler had no immediate plans to invade Britain, Mussolini's forces invaded Greece, and Italian aircraft bombed Athens. "Then we must bomb Rome," was Churchill's immediate response, in a note to the new Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Charles Portal.

—Martin Gilbert
Churchill: A Life

The first contribution of airpower to the collapse of Italy was its effect on Allied grand strategy.¹ Many of the grand strategy deliberations revolved around the appropriate military strategy for defeating the Axis powers in Europe, competing British and American strategic bombing doctrines, and the efficacy of airpower to eliminate Germany and Italy through strategic bombing.

After the successful invasion of North Africa in Operation Torch on 11 November 1942, British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill first suggested a post-Tunisian strategy that would be the British position for much of the next 12 months. In a cable to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, dated 18 November 1942,

Mr. Churchill declared that after North Africa had been conquered "the paramount task" before the Allies would be that of "using the bases on the African shore to strike at the under-belly of the Axis in effective strength and in the shortest time." The statement might be considered as implying an invasion and a subsequent operation by land on the Italian mainland; but at the moment Mr. Churchill appeared to be concerned only with an air offensive, for he followed the statement by a discussion of air strategy against Italy. . . . "All the [Italian] industrial centers should be attacked in an intense fashion, every effort being made to render them *uninhabitable and to terrorize and paralise [sic] the population.*" (Emphasis added)²

Although Churchill mentioned "industrial centers" in this cable, it is obvious he was referring to population centers and an air strategy which was more commonly known as city busting. Moreover, as early as December 1942, the American press echoed this opinion stating that "the low state of Italian morale continue[s] to suggest that the proper kind of psychological and military attack would bring about open revolt."³

The president referred this cable to the US joint chiefs of staff (JCS) with instructions to prepare a reply to the prime minister. The JCS could not choose a common response and chose to provide the president with a majority and minority report. The majority report recommended further operations in

the Mediterranean which included the conquest of Sardinia or Sicily, with the latter preferred, and "extend the offensive by naval and air action, and limited land operations to the mainland of Italy," or raid southern France, or capture Crete and the Dodecanese.⁴ In contrast, the minority report's argument centered on the proposition that the best way to help the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and prepare for the cross-channel invasion was to destroy the capacity of Germany to wage war by an aerial offensive.⁵ As both reports had merit, the JCS included both in a reply to Churchill dated 27 November 1942. Thus, this early reply demonstrated the schism in the preferred American strategies that would continue until late summer, 1943.

From 30 November to 4 December, the Combined Planning Staff (CPS), later to become the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), met several times to resolve the differing American and British post-Tunisian strategies. The CPS could only agree to present three position papers at the upcoming meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill at the Casablanca Conference. In a 1947 interview, Adm Sir Andrew Browne Cunningham recalls that "as to [the] difference in British and US strategy—Cunningham says he thinks that the British military and naval people always knew they had to fight the Germans cross-channel. However, they wanted to soften them up first in the Mediterranean. Never any doubt that they would do the [OVERLORD] operation."⁶

The British position paper expressed the idea that the main weight of the effort should fall on Italy, with the Allied forces to conduct an operation against either Sardinia or Sicily as soon as possible. The US Army position was to invade Sicily and then to assess the next move based on troop availability. The USAAF position was the "best way to win the war was by an all-out air offensive from the UK against Germany's capacity to wage war, followed by a land invasion against the continent across the English Channel."⁷ Thus these preliminary events set the stage for first meeting of the principals at Casablanca.

Casablanca Conference

James Parton records in his biography of Maj Gen Ira C. Eaker that the Casablanca Conference "turned out to be one of the war's most decisive, especially in regard to the use of airpower."⁸ Among the many issues decided upon at Casablanca in January 1943, two stand out as critically important. First, after much debate, US air leaders convinced Churchill that daylight precision bombing should be given a chance. Second, the major participants agreed to invade Sicily in an operation code-named Husky. Moreover, the Casablanca Conference provided an opportunity to discuss these issues within the context of grand strategy as a whole.⁹

Saving daylight precision bombing proved to be a near thing. At Casablanca, Gen Henry "Hap" Arnold knew Royal Air Force (RAF) leaders

had taken the matter up with the prime minister and were "determined that the Americans should not do daylight bombing, but should join their own night bombardment effort."¹⁰ Because of the prime minister's affection for General Eaker, then Eighth Air Force commander in England, Arnold sent for him.

Upon Eaker's arrival at Casablanca, Arnold told him that "the President is under pressure from the prime minister to abandon day bombing and put all our bomber force in England into night operations along with (and preferably under the control of) the RAF."¹¹ Eaker had three hours to prepare a paper on the subject. His paper titled, "The Case for Day Bombing," succinctly argued for continuing American daylight precision bombing. Listing seven reasons on the first page to catch the prime minister's eye, it also included 16 pages of supporting documents. Churchill, however, was only nearly convinced by Eaker's work.¹²

In a last attempt to win over the prime minister, Eaker met with Churchill personally. Churchill, who liked Eaker from his dealings with him in Britain, soon became enamored with Eaker's seventh point: "When he came to the line about the advantages of round-the-clock bombing, he rolled the words off his tongue as if they were tasty morsels."¹³ Eaker still did not convince the prime minister of the theoretical underpinnings of daylight precision bombing. However, Eaker made Churchill see the advantages of continual round-the-clock pressure on the enemy. So the prime minister withdrew his suggestion before the president to switch American bombers to night operations. After that Arnold spoke with the president and Gen George C. Marshall and the American staff "... and everyone said, 'Go ahead with your daylight precision bombing.'"¹⁴

With respect to gaining agreement to invade Sicily and a host of lesser issues, the British staff was more successful. An American staff officer, Charles H. Donnelly, recalls in his autobiography the skill of the British at Casablanca.

They [the British] had much more experience in foreign diplomatic and military negotiations, also more patience. Over the centuries they had achieved organization and modus operandi which served them well. Our people found that out at [the] Casablanca Conference when they went to the meeting ill-prepared and much understaffed, to the point that the U.S. Chiefs of Staff were embarrassed. . . . When they were trying to swing us over to their point of view in some particular matter it was not uncommon for them to bring the matter up in a number of different committees and discussion groups. . . . with the results that on several occasions someone expressed a view opposite to our official position. . . . Even General Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Force, got talked into a commitment to furnish the British with 300 C-47 transports for a Far East Operation before he talked it over with his logistics experts. It took a couple of months to get him off this hook.¹⁵

According to President Roosevelt's biographer James MacGregor Burns, "The British were elated. They felt they had won almost every point of contention. Brooke was disappointed that the plan made no mention of Italy, but he could console himself with the thought that event would dictate this as the next move, just as the pouring of troops into Africa had made Sicily the next logical

step.”¹⁶ The Casablanca Conference illustrated the subtlety by which the British staff could drag the Americans along to their priority of knocking Italy out of the war. Nevertheless, the British planners backed up their subtlety with honest arguments for the proposed intermediate operations.

The argument of British planners for Operations Husky or Brimstone (invasion of Sardinia) was twofold. First, allowing time for the buildup of men and equipment in Britain for a cross-channel invasion would allow the Germans at least a six-month respite and have no guarantee for success at such an early date. Second, further operations in the Mediterranean theater with experienced forces already in place would continue pressure on the Germans and might knock Italy out of the war.¹⁷

The formidable negotiating heavyweight, Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir Alan Brooke, took this latter argument one step further. He argued strongly that “an effort should be made to force the collapse of Italy by bombing attacks from the UK, North Africa, and Sicily, but he did not believe that the Allies could undertake any other offensive operations against Italy in 1943 unless she should collapse completely as a result of Husky.”¹⁸ While USAAF officers thought this effort would be a distraction from the buildup for the England-based air campaign against Germany, Brooke’s position was weakly supported by General Marshall.¹⁹

Initially, the Americans were not only opposed to Operation Brimstone but to Husky as well. The primary objective was still Germany, and securing sea-lanes in the Mediterranean seemed to be the only requirement in that theater. At Casablanca, Roosevelt eventually decided that Husky might break the morale of the Italians, and that in any case, the capture of Sicily would afford additional bases for any subsequent operations against Italy or Germany.²⁰

Significantly, the prime minister recommended “that it would be advisable to maintain a threat of bombardment against Rome as an additional means of cracking morale, but felt that the bombardment should not be carried out without further consultation between himself and Mr. Roosevelt.”²¹ The president agreed with Churchill. The bombing of Rome would be an important topic at the Trident Conference.

In short, the Americans saved daylight precision bombing at Casablanca but went further down the strategic path preferred by the British—to knock Italy out of the war by whatever means in order to weaken Germany before attempting a cross-channel invasion. The British would continue, however, to argue that Italy might collapse from aerial bombardment alone. Although the American staff learned some hard lessons on negotiating tactics from the British, their tutelage was not over.

Trident Conference

Although military historians often frame the Casablanca Conference as being more pivotal, the developments at Trident had greater impact on the

events of 1943. By the time the Trident Conference had convened in May 1943, the combined arms of the Allies had dealt the Germans and Italians a devastating blow at Tobruk. Against this backdrop, the British staff pressed forward with their proposal that a small invasion of the Italian mainland might be a necessary coup de main, while again resurfacing the issue that an aerial campaign could in itself cause the collapse of Italy.

The two Allied leaders remained undecided on the basic strategy for Europe. During the first Trident meeting on 12 May 1943, Churchill proposed that the first objective was in the Mediterranean and the great prize was to get Italy out of the war by whatever means possible. The collapse of Italy would "cause a chill of loneliness over the German people, and might be the beginning of their doom."²² However, the president was very concerned with any operations following North Africa and perhaps sensed he was being lead to a diversion from what should be the main effort. "Certain questions presented themselves in relation to the Mediterranean. Need we invade the soil of Italy, or could we crush her by air attack? Would Germany defend Italy? Would Italy be an economic burden to us? He did not think so. Would arguments against a general conquest of Italy apply equally against a toe and heel operation to establish contact with Yugoslavia?"²³ Over the course of the next 13 days, the deliberations at the conference partially answered the president's questions.

While these arguments were much the same as at Casablanca, two subtle events took place at Trident, with Sir Alan Brooke taking the initiative. First, Roosevelt and Churchill decided to perform some unspecified operation after Husky to knock Italy out of the war—which had been the British strategy all along. More importantly, the decision was going to be Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower's to recommend. Second, US Army Chief of Staff Marshall seemed to become a true supporter of airpower, which Donnelly suggests might have stemmed from his insistence "that any further operations in the Mediterranean not interfere with the cross-channel operation in 1944."²⁴ Unlike large ground forces, airpower could easily be transferred between theaters.

General Eisenhower did not attend the Trident Conference. The lack of consensus by the conferees on post-Husky operations, based in part on unknowables of Husky as well as whether airpower alone could knock Italy out of the war, led to an interesting compromise.²⁵ In minutes of the final principals' meeting at the Trident Conference, Alan Brooke sums up this compromise. "General Eisenhower would not be able to tell which operation he could do after HUSKY until the situation had declared itself. The idea, therefore, was to plan several operations and to decide, at the meeting to be held after HUSKY had been launched, which of them to carry out. . . . General Eisenhower would be instructed to prepare those operations which were best calculated to eliminate Italy. It was the elimination of Italy which would place these prizes within our grasp, and the right operation to bring this about would depend upon the situation after HUSKY."²⁶ In essence,

Roosevelt and Churchill would be placed in the position of agreeing to or discarding the recommendation of their supreme commander in the field.

Moreover, General Marshall reminded the conference that Eisenhower had already put in summaries of plans against the heel and toe of Italy, and against Sardinia, and had expressed a preference for Sardinia. The British were quick to corral the Americans. Churchill thought Sardinia was "an eccentric operation" while Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder thought any surface attack on Sardinia would be difficult to stage because of the lack of air support. Therefore, the prime minister "did not agree that Sardinia could be an acceptable alternative."²⁷

The second subtle event at Trident seemed to be the conversion of General Marshall into an airpower advocate but not necessarily in the American mold of daylight precision bombing. "General Marshall said that he thought that Sir Alan Brooke forgot the fact that there would be continual air operations in the Mediterranean. Germany would not know when we were about to strike a blow, and her troops would be contained in the area. We had built great hopes of crippling Germany by air attack, and he felt, therefore, that this would be more successful against Italy where the resistance would be less."²⁸ Whereas at Trident, Marshall shared the president's skepticism at British proposals for land invasion in the Mediterranean, at Trident he seemed to voice agreement with the majority opinions of the British on the use of airpower alone to cause the collapse of Italy.

The destructive power against fighters shown by the B-17's had been encouraging, as had also their accuracy in bombing which had forced fighter reaction to their attack. . . . All these possibilities had a bearing on what could be achieved to hasten the collapse of Italy by air action alone. . . . Operation HUSKY should provoke further air fights which would weaken the enemy and might leave us in a position to bomb Italy almost unmolested. Since correct application of airpower was all important, the Chiefs of Staff would deeply regret any failure to exploit a favorable opportunity which might be presented to use its cumulative effect in the Mediterranean at this time.²⁹

Only Sir Charles Portal disagreed that "air alone would achieve the desired result [of knocking Italy out of the war]. It had never been claimed that Germany could be knocked out by air alone, but rather that it would reduce her power . . . [she] would be so weakened to permit of her defeat."³⁰ Perhaps Portal was only trying to support the British Italian mainland invasion position.

Following the Trident Conference, the Allies were still not in complete agreement that the invasion of the Italian mainland should take place. The British staff thought one of the few invasion skeptics was General Marshall who "insisted that any further operations in the Mediterranean not interfere with the cross-channel operation in 1944."³¹ The British had agreed to Operation Overlord but wanted the date to be flexible pending operations in the Mediterranean and satisfactory German weakness.³² Marshall, over concern for the preparations and success of Overlord, was interested in any military option which brought rapid closure to this distraction in the

Mediterranean. For Marshall, airpower was one answer to his Overlord concerns.

The conversion of Marshall was important, as the chief of staff was the senior US representative at the upcoming Algiers Conference, facing the formidable Churchill, Brooke, and Tedder. Also, the British staff left the possibly dissenting Portal with the CCS in Washington. The decisions and adjudication made at Trident set the stage for the final British effort at Algiers to steer the Americans, specifically Eisenhower, toward executing the preferred British strategy.

Algiers Conference

While Trident seemed to leave post-Husky operations in the air, Churchill seemed determined to take matters in his own hands. He did not wait until General Eisenhower launched preliminary operations for Husky, scheduled for 10 July, to begin influencing the supreme allied commander's post-Husky decision.

The first of three meetings at the Algiers Conference occurred on 29 May 1943, soon after Trident ended on 25 May. The first meeting primarily reviewed Trident's decisions and directives for General Eisenhower. This meeting closed on Eisenhower's opinion on three possible timelines for Operation Husky.

1. A quick Sicilian collapse.
2. Stubborn resistance encountered in Husky but success foreseeable by, say, 15 August.
3. Prolonged and bitter resistance which will tie down aircraft and landing craft for an indefinite period.

The prime minister stated that "it would be bad if nothing happened between August or September and next May. Unless we should be repulsed at the beaches in Husky, we should make plans and decide which to use when Husky has been started." The conference members agreed that they would reconvene on 31 May to discuss Eisenhower's Husky estimation.³³

The British had what they needed for the second meeting, which then focused on when Eisenhower could provide the CCS with a recommended post-Husky operation. Churchill urged Eisenhower "that if, by the first of August, we could predict that the conquest of Husky would be complete by 15 August, an attack on the mainland of Italy should be made."³⁴ After much debate centered favorably on the invasion of the Italian mainland at the *heel* and *toe* following Husky, Eisenhower ended the meeting stating that

he appreciated the trip which the Prime Minister and General Marshall had made to clarify for him what the Combined Chiefs of Staff had done. He understood it was his responsibility to get information regarding the early phases of HUSKY and forward them to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in time for the latter to make a decision regarding the plan which would follow upon HUSKY without a break or a

stop. He would send not only information, but also strong recommendations based upon the conditions of the moment. He hoped that his three top commanders would have an opportunity to comment more formally on these matters, although he concurred completely in what they had said thus far.³⁵

If this was not enough, the prime minister insisted that an appendix, the only one of the conference, be added to the minutes of this second meeting. This appendix, titled "Background Notes by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense," summarized his arguments advocating the invasion of the Italian mainland.³⁶

Having been successful in their aims so far, the British-focused final meeting at Algiers on 3 June on their desire to bomb the marshaling yards at Rome. The prime minister opened with an inquiry to Tedder to comment upon air force activities. Tedder stated that air attacks on various railroad centers were forcing the Italians to use ferries to take supplies to Sicily.³⁷ The prime minister then pointed out that "he had told the President [at Casablanca] that we would not bomb Rome for the present because of political repercussions. He now felt, however, that there was no tenable objection to the proposition, and for his own part he was ready to agree to bombing the marshaling yards. He pointed out that since daylight precision bombing was quite accurate, it was probable the yards could be attacked with small chance of damage to Rome and none to the Vatican itself."³⁸

Each British delegate added arguments in turn. Anthony Eden, said that Rome would be on the Husky supply line. Cunningham noted that since the Vatican and marshaling yards were on opposite sides of Tiber River, there was a clear line between them.³⁹

In a critical moment, General Marshall weighed in by stating that the marshaling yards were purely a military target, but "the psychological effect would be even more important. The bombing should be executed by a very large force of aircraft."⁴⁰ The prime minister then followed with his statement that the "British War Cabinet and the President should empower General Eisenhower to go ahead with the bombing whenever such action would assist Husky."⁴¹ Churchill told Eisenhower to recommend to the CCS the operations which seemed best.⁴²

Eisenhower finally got to break up this chain of argument by querying if it was possible to achieve the same effect by bombing other rail junctions farther south.⁴³ Tedder had the final word and quickly brushed Eisenhower's question aside with arguments of military necessity, and the matter was decided.

The Conference:

a. agreed

1. that marshaling yards at Rome are an important and necessary military objective within our bombardment plan.
2. that there is no valid reason for refraining from bombing this target, provided that the attacks be made by day and that due care is taken to prevent damage elsewhere.

b. took note that the prime minister and General Marshall would report the above conclusions to the British War Cabinet and US Chiefs of Staff, respectively, with a view of getting authority from the US and British governments empowering General Eisenhower to take action against the marshaling yards at the moment that he thinks best for the successful prosecution of Husky.⁴⁴

In short, from the cable of 18 November 1942 to the Algiers Conference on 3 June 1943, Churchill and the British staff had adroitly moved the Americans toward their original grand strategy of continual Mediterranean operations to knock Italy out of the war. Moreover, the Americans would now attack Rome by air to cause a psychological effect under the guise of military necessity of destroying the important rail centers. A capital had always been the special prize in a morale bombing doctrine and Rome was a special capital. To augment the bombing campaign, this special capital required a tailored strategic psychological campaign.

Office of Strategic Services

In Washington, Roosevelt had his own personal spy to provide him an independent source of intelligence and policy guidance. Maj Gen William J. Donovan, commander of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), personally met with Roosevelt whenever Donovan's worldwide operations found him in Washington. Donovan's personal meeting with Mussolini and inspection of Italian troops in Ethiopia afforded him great credibility. Moreover, Roosevelt simply enjoyed the intrigue and anecdotes forwarded by "America's Master Spy." The OSS's extensive psychological operations (psyop) in Sicily and Italy added to the pressure of military operations on the Italian people and leadership. The OSS-numbered intelligence reports, independently gathered from the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), might have persuaded Roosevelt to bomb Rome.

In 1936 Donovan had bluffed his way into an audience with Il Duce. Pretending to be an important American lawyer and veteran awarded the *Croce di Guerra*, he supposedly represented large corporate interests in the United States.⁴⁵ He so cleverly massaged Mussolini's ego that Il Duce cabled Badoglio of his coming and afforded him a full colonel as an escort. Mussolini had Donovan and his escort put on the next plane to Ethiopia to inspect the Italian military operations.⁴⁶ In Africa, the Italian army greatly impressed Donovan. "He spent time not only with Badoglio, with whom he formed a soldier's friendship for another soldier whose professional ability was evident, but also at corps, division, and brigade levels. He filled his daily diary with comments on battle positions, motor transport, and the S-81, which he described as "a huge bomber, much like the new Boeing the Army is getting out." . . . He analysed Italian military strategy and talked about Italy's

foreign policy with Badoglio. He concluded that Italy would easily win the war.⁴⁷

When Donovan returned for a second inspection in 1942, however, it was altogether a different matter. "In the desert Donovan talked to captured Italian soldiers. Officers whom he had once known as the cocky conquerors of Ethiopia were now bedraggled in defeat. . . . Donovan became convinced that Italy would quit Germany's side as soon as Mussolini could be removed, but that the dictator's overthrow would take many more defeats and probably an invasion of the Italian peninsula."⁴⁸ Donovan saw the poor state and trend of Italian morale. This firsthand evidence, briefed to him personally, was vital to Roosevelt. Moreover, Donovan's psyops and reports were no doubt shaded by these impressions of Italy's wobbly feet and the importance of Mussolini.

Indeed, the OSS strategic psyops plan for Italy ideally complemented the Allied efforts to coerce an Italian capitulation. This plan's three aims were to cause Italy to withdraw from the war, destroy Fascism in Italy, and to lay the foundations for Italian cooperation in the postwar world. To achieve these aims, Donovan and the OSS planned an extensive psyops campaign as the "Italians of all classes are inveterate rumor-mongers."⁴⁹ Several themes were exploited by OSS agents in Italy: including capitalizing on the cleavage between Germans and Italians, between Fascist leaders and the people, between rival Fascist leaders, between the church and the regime, as well as simultaneously enhancing the image of the monarchy.⁵⁰

Although most of these themes were helpful to the psychological pressure on the Italians, especially those enhancing the image of the king, some psyops might have been detrimental. Although exploiting the growing cleavage between Italians and Germans was helpful, some of the specific messages only heightened the Italian fears of seeking a withdrawal from the war. These included exploiting the fears of German invasion after capitulation, such as the fear of the German attitude of racial superiority which might result in enslavement of Italians as laborers and the status of the Italian troops trapped in Russia and the Balkans.⁵¹

The OSS independently administered its psyops campaign and provided independent intelligence to the commander in chief. When the JIC was "established as the intelligence agency in the Joint Chiefs of Staff Organization," the OSS was included at first, but later regained its independence in the charter.⁵² Generally speaking, these weekly numbered reports provided insights into the machinations of Italian politics, resistance groups, public sentiments and opinion, and the suggestions of Italian vulnerability.⁵³

Interestingly, the sources used to make the OSS-numbered reports largely supported the British strategy with respect to Italian morale. Moreover, some reports gave the indication that the efforts of the Bomber Command in the north was having an aggregate effect on the morale of the people. "The loss of these islands [Sardinia and Sicily] or the continuation of heavy air bombardment might possibly bring about a leftist revolution—an eventuality

greatly feared in Vatican circles. Popular feeling is more defeatist in the north of Italy than in the south."⁵⁴

In only one respect did the OSS position differ from the British, and that was in recommending to Roosevelt that he adopt a policy of offering Italy a conditional surrender.⁵⁵ As evidence of OSS influence upon Roosevelt's opinion and actions, in April 1943 the president made a direct appeal for Italians to cast out Mussolini and seek an "honorable surrender."⁵⁶ The OSS reported in turn that this appeal met with considerable acceptance among the Italians, but the British quickly asked for clarification from Roosevelt. Under pressure from Churchill, Roosevelt returned to the previous unconditional surrender policy.

The OSS blamed this British intransigence of the needs of the British Empire, which aimed "to reduce Italy to a position of complete military, political, and economic dependence on Great Britain."⁵⁷ The OSS believed that by voluntary British-Italian cooperation, perhaps led by an anti-Fascist government headed by Ivanoe Bonomi, the British could more easily obtain their strategic desires. Nevertheless, the OSS analysis concluded the British government was independently pursuing important political aims in Italy, over and above the immediate objective of bringing the war to an early and successful conclusion.⁵⁸ During the Second World War, contrived military necessity bound the United States to this aim—one which was especially dear to Churchill the preservation of the British Empire.

Notes

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2. "Air Phase of the Italian Campaign to 1 January 1944," AAFRH-15, Army Air Force Historical Office, Headquarters Army Air Forces, June 1946, 2-3. (Hereinafter cited as AAFRH-15).
3. "Italy: Loss of Morale," *Current History*, December 1942, 327.
4. *Ibid.*, 4.
5. *Ibid.*, 5. The Army historical record indicates that this minority report was prepared by the USAAF member, Col R. P. Williams, and additional textual data strongly suggests ACTS theories.
6. F. D. Pogue, "Interview with Lord Cunningham of Hyndhope," former Naval chief of staff, at Athenaeum, at The Club, London, on 12 February 1947, Office of the Chief of Military History Collection (O.C.M.H.), *WW II Supreme Command*, miscellaneous folder, US Army Military History Institute, 1.
7. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
8. James Parton, *Air Force Spoken Here* (Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1986), 216.
9. R. J. Overy, *The Air War, 1939-1945* (Chelsea, Mass.: Scarborough House, 1991), 73.
10. H. H. Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York: Hutchinson and Co., 1951), 202.
11. Parton, 218.
12. *Ibid.*, 220-21.
13. *Ibid.*, 221.
14. Arnold, 203.
15. Charles H. Donnelly, *The Charles H. Donnelly Papers* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Army Military History Institute, n.d.), 632.
16. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970), 315.

17. F. H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War, Its Influence on Strategy and Operations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 113–15.
18. AAFRH-15, 8.
19. Ibid., 9.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Winston S. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), 791.
23. Ibid., 792.
24. Donnelly, 632.
25. AAFRH-15, 22.
26. Trident Conference Minutes, 25 May 1943, 301–2.
27. Ibid., 302.
28. Ibid., 330.
29. Ibid., 321–22.
30. Ibid., 330.
31. Donnelly, 632.
32. Ibid.
33. Algiers Conference Minutes, 25 May 1943, 468–75.
34. Ibid., 479.
35. Ibid., 488. It is unclear who “they” in the final line meant. Literally, it might mean his top three commanders, but in the overall context of the minutes, it could also mean the prime minister and General Marshall and their arguments for a mainland invasion.
36. Ibid., 489–99.
37. Lord Arthur Tedder, *With Prejudice* (London: Cassell and Cassell, 1966), 439.
38. Algiers Conference Minutes, 499.
39. Ibid., 498–99.
40. Tedder, 439; Algiers Conference Minutes, 499–500; and Solly Zuckerman, *From Apes to Warlords* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 406; and the suggestion by Eisenhower that the same physical military effect could be achieved by attacking the railway line farther south was exactly what the analysis by Zuckerman determined in a December 1943 report.
41. Algiers Conference Minutes, 499.
42. Tedder, 439.
43. Algiers Conference Minutes, 500.
44. Ibid., 500–501.
45. Richard Dunlop, *Donovan, America’s Master Spy* (New York: Rand McNally and Co., 1982), 186.
46. Ibid., 187.
47. Ibid., 188.
48. Ibid., 246.
49. William J. Donovan, *The William J. Donovan Papers* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Army Military History Institute).
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. “OSS Numbered Reports #1, 16, 17, 31, 33, 35, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 52; 7 Jan 43 to 17 August 43,” *Roosevelt Map Room Military Subject Files* (Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1991).
54. “OSS Numbered Report #40, 16 Jul 43.”
55. “OSS Numbered Report #35, 22 Jun 43.”
56. “Italy’s Plight Is Pointed Up by Roosevelt’s Bid She Quit,” *Newsweek*, 21 June 1943, 62; “OSS Numbered Report #36, 24 Jun 43.” “Allied military action, according to the source, could be achieved with little destruction and loss of life if the opposition could be encouraged by Allied adoption of an attitude which would save face for Italy and insure economic survival.”
57. “Report, Italy-Allied and Civilian Occupation,” *The William J. Donovan Papers* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Army Military History Institute, n.d.), iv.
58. Ibid., 9.

Chapter 4

A Tale of Two Tigers

Wracked by Allied bombing, invaded by an overwhelmingly superior Anglo-American army, and refused large-scale aid by the Germans, Italy faced the most terrible problem in its history—how to end the struggle with the Allies without at the same time provoking violent retribution from its erstwhile Nazi Allies. The life of the Italian nation hung in the balance.

—*Newsweek*
2 August 1943

In July 1943, Mussolini had two tigers by the tail. Militarily, following the terrible defeats in the USSR and Africa, he could expect the overwhelming might of the impending Allied invasion or, alternatively, a vengeful German occupation following any attempt to withdraw from the war.¹ Moreover, Allied airpower from both the North African Air Force (NAAF) and Bomber Command subjected Italy to increasingly larger air raids or on the other hand "it would be the *Luftwaffe* instead of the Allied air forces that would be bombing Italian cities."² Politically, he faced growing domestic dissent on many fronts or the gestapo of his double-edged military alliance with Germany. In either scenario, Italy might unavoidably be a giant battlefield, as in the Ukraine, where modern ground war resulted in widespread destruction. From Mussolini's vantage point, Italy's situation was very grim indeed.

Three situations provided clues of the crisis in Mussolini's Italy. First, on the ground, the apparently successful Allied invasion of Sicily demonstrated the potential for Italian military collapse. Second, in the air, Bomber Command efforts on northern Italian cities vindicated the predictions of Italian morale collapse due to Allied bombing. Finally, Italy's polycratic political scene created a crisis when Mussolini failed to press for military aid at a meeting between the Fascist leaders and their staff at Feltre.

Russia, Pantelleria, and Sicily

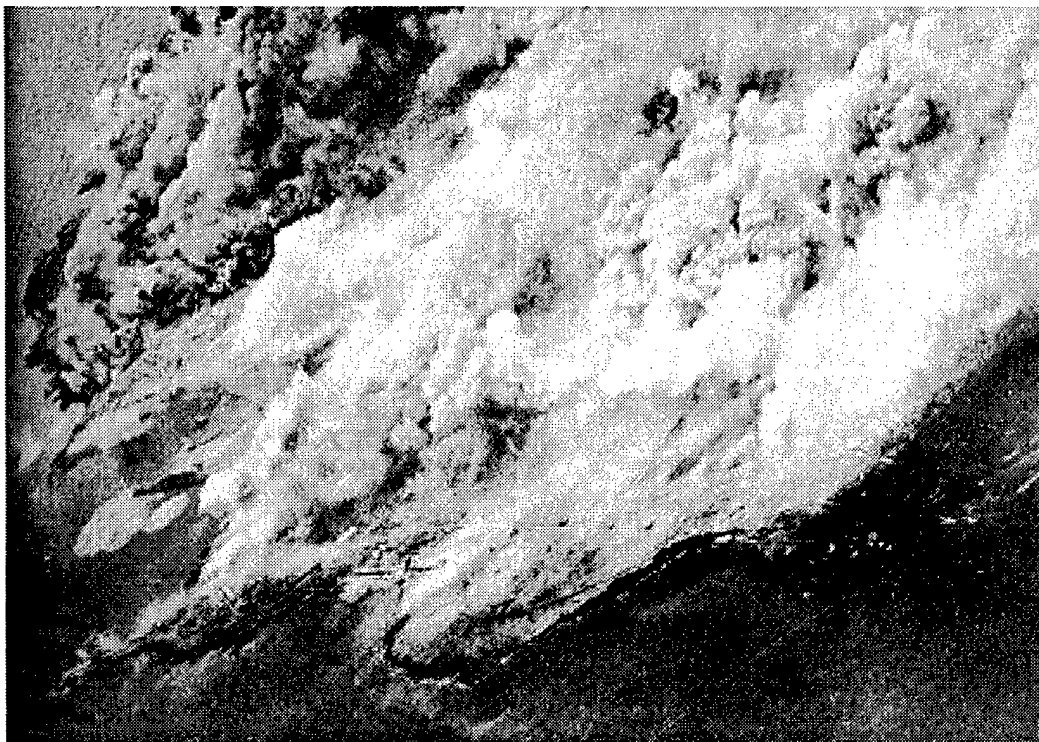
In support of Germany and cruel domestic necessity, Mussolini sent an enormous amount of his combat power to the USSR and the Balkans, never to see it return. At Mussolini's direction, the Italians served on the Russian front, until their destruction at Stalingrad in the Soviet counteroffensives during the winter 1942–43.³ All in all, 227,000 Italians, 22,300 vehicles of all types, and 968 guns entered the Soviet Union, but only 77,000 withered men

came out.⁴ On 20 October 1942, an Italian *Alpini* regiment mutinied in northern Italy when Mussolini ordered it transferred to the Russian Front.⁵ Conveniently, the anti-Fascist, elite Piedmontese regiment died in the swamps of the Don, far from their mountain homes.⁶ "In Russia our ill-armed and worse equipped divisions were almost completely destroyed. There were a good ten divisions. . . . The gravest fact was the following: at the time when Sicily already was being invaded, Mussolini's strategy had disposed thirty-six divisions abroad and only twelve in Italy. . . . But more serious than all this were the sufferings of the population."⁷ These diversions drastically reduced the frontline units and equipment desperately needed to face growing Allied strength in North Africa, where the last of the effective Italian forces were destroyed at the hands of the British and Americans.⁸

For the Allies, an indication of Italian vulnerability came with the surrender of the island of Pantelleria, the so-called Italian Gibraltar. The Allies needed to reduce the major air and naval bases as well as the radar facilities on this volcanic island of 42 square miles, and on the smaller island of Lampedusa before the invasion of Sicily.⁹ The first stage of Operation Corkscrew was to attack the island of Pantelleria by a force of light and medium bombers on 9 May 1943.¹⁰ According to Albert N. Garland, "on 10 May, perhaps still stung by General Marshall's rebuke on his 'lack of adaptability,' Eisenhower thought of making the operation 'a sort of laboratory to determine the effect of concentrated heavy bombing on a defended coastline. He wished the Allied air forces 'to concentrate everything' in blasting the island so that the damage to the garrison, its equipment and morale, would be 'so serious as to make the landing a rather simple affair.'"¹¹ A prolonged campaign of 20 consecutive days of bombing, including five nights of naval shelling, ended with the surrender of the island on 11 June.¹² General Eisenhower, aboard the cruiser *Aurora* spotted two signals—a white cross on the heavily bombed airfield and a white flag on the wrecked harbor installations—thus indicating surrender of the garrison.¹³ (See fig. 1.)

In total, 3,647 sorties dropped 4,844 tons of bombs during the 10 days of June.¹⁴ Craven and Cate record that "at Pantelleria the conquest had been accomplished almost exclusively through air bombardment and surrender had come before the assault troops could contribute" as amphibious forces landed on the island on 11 June under the white flag.¹⁵ "In the final analysis the morale of the defenders was the determining factor in the failure of Pantelleria to put up a strong and prolonged resistance."¹⁶ The main reason the island fell was because it was possible to isolate it completely from mainland support, not solely because of the sheer weight of bombs.¹⁷ Because the air forces had made Eisenhower's experiment a walk-over, however, Pantelleria raised serious questions about comparing naval to aerial bombardment.

In response to these questions, the Joint War Plans Committee requested a comparison between naval and aerial bombardment from the JIC in Whitehall. The JIC report found that the "dispersal of aerial bombardment is as destructive to morale as is the constant pounding of an area under . . . the



Source: Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2, *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943* (1949; new imprint, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 425.

Figure 1. Pantelleria after Aerial Bombardment

presumably more accurate concentration of naval or land guns.”¹⁸ Furthermore, “to be fully effective, air bombardment has to be highly concentrated (as in Rotterdam) or sustained (as during the latter phase of the Tunisian campaign), or both (as in Pantelleria).”¹⁹ Finally, the report concluded that “at Pantelleria, while naval bombardment and the presence of an invasion force of ground troops were undoubtedly strong contributory causes to the swift collapse of the Italian resistance, the heavily sustained air bombardment appears to have played a major role in the destruction of the garrison’s will and ability to prolong the resistance.”²⁰

This comparison between naval and aerial bombardment continued throughout the duration of the Mediterranean campaign. A later analysis of Operation Torch found naval gunfire not very accurate and that bombardment from the sea and air in combination was the most effective means of destroying fortifications and morale.²¹ In contrast, two flag officers interviewed a German admiral in command of the shore defenses of southern France shortly after his capture. The admiral testified that, between the naval bombardment and aerial bombardment, “the air bombings” were the worst.²²

In any case, the surrender of Pantelleria was critical to air superiority and sea control. It cleared the way for the invasion of Sicily, but also indicated the state of the fighting spirit of the Italians. More importantly, the easy victory in Pantelleria under the weight of heavy and persistent air attack gave General Eisenhower something to consider when contemplating later uses of airpower.

After a month of aerial bombardment to gain air superiority and soften Sicilian defenses the Allied forces invaded Sicily in Operation Husky on 10 July 1943. The stunned defenders, without sea or airpower, quickly succumbed and the Allies secured the beachheads the next day. The British easily repulsed the one Axis counterattack, composed of mostly German forces, on the eleventh against their beachhead. Italians danced in the streets as Axis propaganda reported on the twelfth that the Allies had been thrown back into the sea and 70,000 prisoners, including five generals, had been captured.²³ In truth, by the nineteenth the Allies were driving to their main western objective of Palermo, the largest city in Sicily. The US Third Army, under Gen George S. Patton, captured Palermo on 23 July. On 27 July the Allies turned the axis of attack to the west to drive to Messina.

On Sicily, the Italian army displayed extreme war-weariness and the "sense of inferiority and futility has destroyed its zest and spirit."²⁴ The Sicilian defense soon stiffened along a series of defensive positions in the northeast, known as the Etna line. On 29 July, the *Times* (London) reported that "the Germans apparently are responsible for holding the entire [Etna] line, with the Italian troops doing fatigue work such as digging trenches and repairing road blocks. The Germans are believed to be continuing to reinforce Sicily, a fact which has wider implications than those in the zone of operations. The land fighting seems to have reached the stage of attrition and it is likely that the enemy's collapse will come from attacks by our air forces."²⁵

Nevertheless, by 17 August Allied forces had cleared the island, as the two stalwart German divisions escaped with most of their heavy equipment over the Strait of Messina.²⁶ In 38 days the Germans lost 12,000 dead and captured; the Italians losses numbered 147,000, consisting of mainly prisoners, who numbered close to 130,000.²⁷ Allied casualties totaled 17,000, of which 8,000 were Americans and 9,000 British.²⁸ The 17 August date of the capture of Sicily was well in line with Eisenhower's middle possibility of 15 August, which he gave at the first Algiers meeting of 28 May. The combined arms of the Allies again proved more than a match for Axis forces in the Mediterranean.

Sicily was also a psychological loss for the Italian army and the upper classes as a whole. Since 1870, other than Piedmont, Sicily had supplied the greatest number of commissioned and noncommissioned officers to the armies of Italy.²⁹ Many of the aristocracy and landowners, some forcibly transferred from northern Italy after unification, had lost their titles and now their possessions.³⁰ With the fall of Sicily the strategic picture had changed physically and morally for both the army and the political elite. There were

other psychological blows, however, due in part to the effects of airpower on the Italian mainland.

Joint Intelligence Committee

The main responsibility of the JIC was to make common intelligence estimates to the Joint War Plans Committee. In this capacity, the JIC was responsible for predicting the effects of airpower on the Italian mainland. The CCS decided at Casablanca to establish three JICs in order that combined strategic planning be formulated from a combined intelligence picture. JIC was essentially a misnomer. The three JICs were located in Whitehall, Washington, and Algiers (Allied Forces Headquarters). Again, Churchill's influence could be seen

as Secretary of State for War in 1920, he had vainly made the revolutionary suggestion that all British intelligence branches be combined in a single secret service. He repeated this proposal to the Chiefs of Staff after becoming Prime Minister only to be met by similar institutional resistance. Despite this rebuff, Churchill directed the Chiefs to review the system for relating intelligence to the government's procedure for making operational decisions. The result was a considerably strengthened Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), and the creation of the Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS), a subcommittee of the JIC charged with coordinating assessing and disseminating strategic intelligence.³¹

Churchill brought this British JIC concept to the Casablanca Conference, and the United States readily adopted it to enhance coalition coordination and planning.

However, this triumvirate of joint intelligence, due to the political and military influences of its locale, reflected the local preferences of its leaders. Churchill almost continuously interacted with his joint intelligence staff throughout the war.

On one occasion . . . the Prime Minister wanted an intelligence estimate of the German reinforcements in Italy as well as the potential for the political collapse of the Italian government, and . . . he wanted it by 10:30 that same morning. . . . [The duty officer told Brigadier] "Hollis, why don't you tell the silly old man to go to bed, and we'll get on with it as quickly as we can and probably have it ready tomorrow afternoon." . . . Churchill who had been listening on the extension, boomed: "Perhaps it would help you in your deliberations if the silly old man came down to help you." In 15 minutes, Churchill, dressed in his "rompers" [pajamas] was in the Intelligence Operations Room outlining his intelligence requirements.³²

These influences, humorous and otherwise, produced disparate strategic pictures from the three JIC locations. Not surprisingly, the forecasts of the Whitehall JIC supported the position of the British staff. Like the British efforts on the CCS and at the conferences, the Whitehall JIC was yet another chess piece forwarding British strategic desires. In each intelligence estimate, the JIC attempted to ensure continued coalition efforts in the Mediterranean, such as with the invasion of Sicily, until Italy collapsed and the British Empire was secure. This advocacy only appeared more sage as events on

Pantelleria unfolded, but more directly, as the results of Bomber Command air raids on northern Italian cities became evident.

The Whitehall JIC not only supported the strategic aim of knocking Italy out of the war but also the possibility that airpower alone might be capable of achieving this aim.

By the middle of April [1943] it had actively canvassed the possibility that Italy might collapse under air attack alone, concluding that when the weight of bombing was increased after the capture of Sicily "the Italian government would . . . probably sue for peace." . . . And on 6 July, in the last appreciation it issued before the Sicily landings, it had concluded that the loss of Sicily, combined with heavy and sustained air attack on northern and central Italy and a landing in southern Italy, might well produce a breakdown in civil administration or an Italian request for an armistice.³³

As another example of British staff unity and coordination, the assessment of the Whitehall JIC conveniently supported the desired British air strategy in the Mediterranean. The effects of bombing on northern Italian cities supported this advocacy as well.

Later in the war, the British continued to successfully use the JIC in this capacity. At one point in 1944, this sly arrangement forced Gen Carl "Tooey" Spaatz to send the US ambassador to Great Britain, John Winant, to see the president about continuing British efforts to nominate population centers for daylight precision bombing in the Balkans. Winant "complained that targets were being selected by the [Whitehall] Joint Intelligence Committee, which had no US representation, and forwarded by Portal."³⁴ Portal then bypassed Spaatz and sent strategic directions to Gen Sir Henry Wilson at Fifteenth Air Force. Portal eventually apologized to Arnold and Spaatz for this end run, but American bombers of the Fifteenth Air Force attacked several capitals in southeastern Europe, under the cover of an American policy of being "strictly limited to military objectives."³⁵ Still, the effects of bombing northern and central Italian cities justified the JIC position and advocacy of Italian collapse. In fact, the effects of Allied bombing made the position of the Whitehall JIC look like conservative reporting, rather than analytically predictive.

Allied Bombing

On the evening of 19 July Mussolini told Ambrosio, "Italy, I said, was at the moment being called upon to bear the full burden of the onslaught of two empires, the British Empire and the United States. She was in danger of being overwhelmed; the air attacks were not only undermining the morale of the people, but were also causing grave damage to war production and to the whole social fabric of the nation's life." During this period the Allied air forces continued three major bombing strategies. The first was Bomber Command's raids on northern Italian cities. Second, the North African Allied Air Forces spent most of their time assisting Allied ground forces with close air support and interdiction as part of Operation Husky. Finally, when forces could be

spared, the heavy and medium bombers of the North African Strategic Air Forces (NASAF) struck strategic targets on the mainland. Each of these strategies contributed to the pressure on Italy, but in different ways. However, the Bomber Command efforts in the north gave the greatest testimony to the state of Italian morale under aerial bombardment.

The results of Bomber Command's raids on northern Italian cities from the United Kingdom gave the British reason to suspect that Italian morale could be broken. According to British air doctrine, British air leaders directed these frequent air attacks at Italian morale as much as industrial plants and communication centers.³⁷ Arthur "Bomber" Harris recalls the effect of seven night raids on Turin in late autumn of 1942 and other cities of the industrial north.

The attacks were far lighter than those directed against Germany at that time; not only were a [smaller] number of aircraft sent, but at this great range a small bomb load had to be carried. Nevertheless the effect on Italian morale was enormous and out of all proportion to the weight of the attack and to the extent of the damage. Three hundred thousand people, half the population, fled from Turin after our second attack on the city that autumn and there was as great, and probably greater, panic after the daylight attack on Milan by less than one hundred Lancasters.³⁸

By July, the OSS was reporting that authorities were "having difficulty maintaining control" and "a similar treatment for Milan is recommended."³⁹

This is precisely the effect that Churchill desired when he issued his 14 February 1942 directive authorizing Bomber Command to attack Germany "without restriction"; the objective being to destroy "the morale of the enemy civil population and in particular, of the industrial workers."⁴⁰

After the raids on Turin and other Italian cities, Mussolini declared in public that it was necessary to organize a nightly population dispersal of the industrial cities in the north (*sfollamento*).⁴¹ OSS sources indicated "that quantities of supplies from bombed cities such as Genoa are being shipped to Rome in belief that Rome will not be bombed."⁴² Harvey points out that this evacuation as well as the physical damage reduced production in Italy by 60 percent, but the nightly exodus and late morning arrival of the evacuated workers accounted for the greater effect.⁴³ Fascists paid a political price for failing to cope with the bombing: "Another major renovation [within the Fascist party], announced on the war anniversary last week, resulted in the dismissal of nineteen regional prefects, mostly in the heavily bombed out areas."⁴⁴ Ironically, these northern prefect were supporters of the war unto death, as opposed to the peace conspirators in the as of yet unbombed Naples.⁴⁵ The Fascist purging and policy of *sfollamento* were not a substitute for an adequate air defense of Italian cities⁴⁶ and were politically detrimental to its cause.

As the second strategy of airpower, North African Army Air Forces supported ground forces engaged in combat on Sicily. While the British were seeing the desired effects of their "city busting" in northern Italy, the Americans were less successful in the south. The air plan, issued late in June

in support of Husky, focused on gaining and maintaining air superiority. With regard to direct support of the army, one American general described it as a "most masterful piece of uninformed prevarication, totally unrelated to the Naval and Military Joint Plan." Despite this planning shortcoming, due to the lack of interservice coordination, the army nevertheless preferred the preparatory aerial bombardment which it could control, to the naval bombardment out of its hands.⁴⁷ During the week following the Allied landings of Operation Husky, Allied air units were busy giving direct support to the invasion forces. Afterwards General Spaatz sent the bombers and their escort fighters against enemy airfields, communications, and other targets on the mainland of Italy.⁴⁸

Although maintaining air superiority was the foremost objective of air leaders, the third major mission of the airpower was the bombing of enemy communications, which included railway centers. Social anthropologist Solly Zuckerman had been studying the effects of bombing in British cities and North Africa for several years and became an advocate of bombing railway nodes. This was not a new idea, as a December 1918 report also identified bombing railroad centers as a direct means of destroying supplies and demoralizing transportation personnel.⁴⁹ William "Billy" Mitchell wrote in the late 1920s that "rail terminals are the most worthy targets" of a rail system.⁵⁰

A good friend and staff member of General Spaatz, Zuckerman told an inquiring Tedder in early July that "destroying all rail and road communications on which the enemy depended on" was the best way to support Husky.⁵¹ Although this opinion disagreed with an official intelligence report given in June, Zuckerman's recommendation was borne out by the results in Sicily. According to Zuckerman, as the successes from Operation Husky rolled in, Tedder's staff again asked him what targets would accelerate the enemy's defeat.⁵² General Eaker, commanding the Eighth Air Force in England, also found Zuckerman's theories quite useful. Zuckerman returned to England in late July and visited Eaker in August 1943, and Eaker found him "a most interesting fellow with a valuable fund of information."⁵³ Finally, Air Marshal Tedder felt these lessons could be applied to other theaters.⁵⁴

Zuckerman's preliminary report, published on 20 July 1943, again advocated bombing railway centers. His final Sicily report (28 December 1943) stated that "the Sicilian and Southern Italian rail systems had become practically paralyzed by the end of July 1943—as a result of attacks on only six railway centers, Naples, Foggia, San Giovanni, Reggio, Messina, Palermo."⁵⁵ (See map 1 titled Central Mediterranean.) It is important to note that the San Lorenzo marshaling yards in the heart of Rome, which were the justification for breaking the Casablanca Conference moratorium on bombing Rome, were not an important target for this successful railway campaign.⁵⁶ At Algiers, Eisenhower's unanswered query about the military necessity of bombing Rome was intuitively correct—it was not a vital target for the railway campaign.

General Spaatz backed up the Casablanca Conference moratorium (not to bomb Rome until the two Allied leaders conferred and agreed to do so) with a

[illegible]

27

published military order. Spaatz worried that some overzealous aircrew flying over the southern Italian mainland might attack Rome, in effect disobeying the civilian directive. So on 19 May 1943, Spaatz directly forbade the bombing of Rome, either the railway centers or other targets, without direct permission from his headquarters. This was about to change.

Italy

In December 1940, Mr. Churchill in person told the Italians that they had to throw overboard "one man and one man alone," Mussolini, and make a separate peace with Britain.

—Gaetano Salvemini

Finally, Italy's unique internal political structure was the last source that contributed to a critical situation in June 1943.⁵⁷ Owing to Italy's unique history and the particular circumstances in which the Fascists ascended to power in the early 1920s, Italy had a polyglot political power structure with four separate sources of legitimacy: Mussolini, the monarchy, the Fascist Grand Council, and the Vatican. When the Fascists, led by Mussolini, threatened to march on Rome in October 1922, the monarchist, General Badoglio, pleaded for the chance to rout them: "Sire, with just two companies of Carabinieri I could sweep those Blackshirts upstarts into the sea."⁵⁸

King Victor Emmanuel III of the House of Savoy chose a more prudent route and invited Mussolini to form a coalition government where he initially served as a prime minister on behalf of the monarchy.⁵⁹ The king may have thought that fascism was a passing phase and did not want reactionary thugs to assassinate him, like they had murdered his father.⁶⁰ This relationship was similar to that of the British monarchy, but without the institutions of democracy. By 1926, Il Duce had transformed Italy into a single-party, totalitarian state. However, in a strange amalgamation, his brand of fascism preserved both the crown and capitalism. Practically speaking, unlike nazism, the Fascist party was a form of insurance for the king as well as the individual Italian: if you joined, you were reasonably safe.⁶¹ The king and Crown Prince Umberto always wore army uniforms, never the Fascist Blackshirt. So, "even in the supposedly totalitarian Fascist regime, the army remained loyal—the *Regio Esercito* [Royal Army]."⁶²

As Mussolini's enormous dictatorial power grew, only the Grand Council of Fascism checked it from becoming absolute. Originally founded in 1923 as a party central committee, by 1932 various political forces had transformed it into the highest governing body of the Fascist state. "The Grand Council, among its many functions, regulated the succession to the Party leadership, and just before the war—to the controlled fury of the Sovereign—that of the Crown itself."⁶³ In an analysis by the Office of Strategic Services, its director, Donovan recorded

Grand Council of Fascism. This is virtually the general staff of the Fascist regime and is dominated by Mussolini. . . . As the "supreme organ" which coordinates and integrates all the activities of the Fascist regime, it has important deliberative and advisory functions pertaining to constitutional, legislative, and Fascist party matters. . . . The Grand Council is literally Mussolini's instrument, and he is by law its President. He convokes it when he deems it necessary, [and] fixes its agenda.⁶⁴

Because any Italian revolutionary must run on a republican, antimonarchist platform, this was the best institution Mussolini could create to demonstrate pluralism—given the nature of fascism and its authoritarian leader.

Of course, all this temporal power led to difficulties with the pope. The Lateran Pacts of 1929 ended a half-century of conflict between the Italian kingdom and the Vatican. With the Lateran Pacts, the Vatican no longer subjected the king to excommunication for the conquests of the last century.⁶⁵ During the unification, Italian troops occupied all the papal territories of central Italy, without anyone in Italy shedding a drop of blood to uphold the sovereignty of the Holy See.⁶⁶ With a precarious grip on the Vatican City, however, growing Fascist power further exacerbated church-state relations. For various reasons, Mussolini signed the pact on behalf of the king and reinstated the sovereignty of the pope over the Vatican.

This popular move led to a decade-long peace between the government and Pope Pius XI. "While denouncing Nazi and Fascist ideologies in abstract terms and without mentioning names, [like his predecessors, Pius XII] took great pains up to the eve of war to exalt with words of high praise the Duce and his government."⁶⁷ This peace tacitly ended with Italy's entry into the war in alliance with Nazi Germany. For every word Mussolini spoke against peace, like "urging upon Italians 'cold, conscious, implacable hatred against the enemy'" the pope would counter by declaring that "hatred is a satanic word" which should be "expunged from the Christian dictionary."⁶⁸ Thus the pope remained as an unassailable antipropagandist, living in sanctuary in the Italian capital. Besides, in a nation of Roman Catholics, the power of the church was transcendental.

The Fascists, the monarchy, and the church all drew their political power from the people. By 1942, the morale of the individual Italian was at its lowest ebb. While the Allies bombed them, their own government had starved and impoverished them for years as Italy attempted to cope with the demands of war. On 27 September 1941, the Council of Ministers cut the daily bread portion to 7 ounces, 14 ounces for heavy laborers.⁶⁹ On 1 October, Fascist orders banned stores from selling clothing and textiles, but these orders still directed shop owners to pay wages to their workers.⁷⁰ Indeed, Italy was more like a subject country in the German empire than an alliance member, as the allowance of food by the end of 1942 was less than half that allowed in Germany.⁷¹ Furthermore, government fiscal policy impoverished the people as inflation continued to accelerate out of control due to huge government bond sales.⁷² In three years of war, the government had quintupled the money supply to 96 billion lira, with more than 10 billion alone issued in the final three weeks of Mussolini's tenure.⁷³ The soaring prices of property, jewelry,

gold, and anything of presumable postwar value, indicated the lack of confidence in the lira and the government.⁷⁴ Finally, in large cities public services and transportation became increasingly disorganized.⁷⁵ In short, by 1943, because of government mismanagement of both the war and the domestic economy, "The Italian people have lost faith in Mussolini, faith in their King, and . . . faith in themselves, except in their capacity to work hard, to breed, to endure hard standards of living and survive."⁷⁶

While this polycratic political arrangement was indeed strange, it worked satisfactorily when things went well. Italian historians remember that Mussolini's successful military adventure into Ethiopia was popular with all segments of Italian society.⁷⁷ In July 1943 the war was not going well, and the Fascist fibers of this tapestry were unraveling, despite the attempts to mend the rips. "The only real recent change in relations between the Fascist and the monarchy had been that both the Duce and the Fascist party now try to shelter themselves behind the prestige of the throne, which still means something to the man in the street. This is far different from the old days when it was considered anti-Fascist to cheer the royal march more loudly than the Fascist anthem. One sign of this change is that home propagandists now increasingly appeal to the people to 'rally round the Royal House of Savoy and the Duce.'"⁷⁸ Now this strange political construct, under the duress of impending defeat, would prove to be an exploitable weakness and the mechanism for Mussolini's downfall.

Feltre

News of the first bombing of Rome was brought to Il Duce as he talked with the Führer. The timing was quite deliberate; the raid had been perfect in that regard.

—George Botjer
Sideshow War

On the night of 17 July 1943, all these events were coming to climax: the ground campaign in Sicily, the air campaign on the Italian mainland, and the political unraveling in the Italian government.⁷⁹ Hitler received an alarming report that things were going poorly for Mussolini in Rome, so he instructed the German ambassador in Rome, Field Marshal August von Mackensen, to arrange a meeting between Il Duce and Hitler somewhere in Italy. The two delegations converged on Feltre the morning of 19 July, in what Deakin describes at the "ultimate crisis of the Axis alliance."⁸⁰

While on the train ride from the airport to Feltre, the two Axis leaders exchanged pleasantries, as their military counterparts sparred. Gen Wilhelm Keitel, Wehrmacht chief of staff, informed Gen Vittorio Ambrosio, his Italian counterpart, that the Germans expected the Allies to invade the mainland but that Germany could not spare the aircraft or armored divisions requested beyond what the German Staff promised in a message on 13 July.⁸¹ According to Keitel, the Germans were to deliver a three-part ultimatum, "All power to

the Duce, elimination of the Italian Royal House, stronger German intervention under German command" was the gist of the German agenda.⁸² Although these two statements made by Keitel seem contradictory, apparently the only aid the Germans wanted to give the Italians was security forces to maintain Mussolini's government.⁸³

Hitler began the conference at eleven o'clock with a two-hour monologue in German, a language that Mussolini understood far less than he let on. He spoke of war situation, the importance of raw materials, and the mobilization of more manpower. Mussolini sat uncomfortably on the edge of a chair which was "too broad and too deep for him."⁸⁴

At midday a messenger interrupted the conference. The Duce's secretary came into the room holding a paper which he handed directly to Mussolini. Il Duce read from the note, "at this moment the enemy is engaged in a violent bombardment of Rome."⁸⁵ Hitler then continued his diatribe stating that the Axis must defend Sicily with the ground forces already in place and that the request for 2,000 fighter aircraft was out of the question.⁸⁶ Gen Efisia Marras, the Italian attaché in Berlin, stated he did not know of any offer of additional troops, besides, "his impression and recollection was that Mussolini chiefly wanted planes."⁸⁷

Italy's desperate need for aircraft cannot be overstated. At the outbreak of war in 1940, Italy only had 454 bombers and 129 first-line fighters. Aircraft production never reached the levels of Allied production. In over three years of war, Italy had manufactured only 7,183 new aircraft. In fact, by 1943 Italian aircraft production in a year was what Britain alone was making in a month. For example, in March 1943, the Italians produced less than 420 planes, several times less than monthly combat attrition losses.⁸⁸ Moreover, the *Regia Aeronautica* simply never had enough planes, pilots, effective maintenance and repair facilities, and few anti-aircraft defenses. Finally, the Italians were simply ineffective. "The early attempts at bombing proved ineffective as there had been little active staff preparation in training, selection of targets or tactical research . . . other bombing attacks against Egypt produced the same [ineffective] result and produced disillusionment to the Italian advocates of strategic airpower."⁸⁹ While the Italians lost faith in their ability to offensively employ airpower, by 1943 it was clear that they had also lost their defensive capability as well.

Following Hitler's opening monologue, the delegations dispersed for lunch. Despite his terrible chronic ulcers,⁹⁰ Mussolini nervously ate everything in sight to hide his weakness.⁹¹ Ambrosio, after meetings with Keitel and observing the morning's events, determined that the Germans were unwilling to offer the much-needed help to the Italians. According to Giuseppe Bastianini, the foreign undersecretary, Ambrosio now delivered without introduction an ultimatum to Mussolini to get out of the war within 15 days.⁹² Mussolini asked his staff to be seated and replied tersely that he had thought of this hypothesis, but it was not that simple. "What attitude will Hitler take? Perhaps you think that he [Hitler] would give us liberty of action?"⁹³ In truth, Mussolini could not think of a way out that included Mussolini.⁹⁴

According to General Rintelen, German military attaché to Rome, Mussolini had promised Ambrosio at lunch to make a final attempt to describe to Hitler Italy's desperate situation during the return train journey. "He (Mussolini) only asked for further German help, especially in the air. He could not bring himself to admit that Italy could not fight any longer" without German help.⁹⁵ Mussolini could only bring himself to make empty platitudes to Hitler.⁹⁶

Although there is no evidence that the British knew the agenda at Feltre through Ultra or other sources, a small article that appeared in the *Times* (London) on the morning of 19 July 1943 seems a little too prescient and suggestive.

There is nothing tangible to support suggestions that Italy is on the eve of far-reaching developments. . . . There is evidence of some demoralization among Italians, but—as the situation is seen from London—the point has not yet been reached when a political initiative directed at the overthrow of Mussolini and his system is to be looked for.

A new factor in the situation, however, is the growing realization among Italians that they cannot rely on much German help, but must themselves assume the burden of the country's defence. . . . When, however, it is understood with what calculation the Germans are leaving Italy in the lurch there may be another story to tell.⁹⁷

Indeed, Italy and Mussolini were on their own. On one hand, Italy could choose to endure the relentless air and ground attack of the two Allied empires. On the other hand, according to the OSS sources, Italy could betray the Germans who "are quite prepared to treat the Italians as they would an enemy."⁹⁸ Ironically, Mussolini's unstable political situation paralleled his ulcerous physical condition: On the train ride back to Rome, "Mussolini rolled in pain on the floor, trying now and then to ease the agony by balancing on his elbows and knees."⁹⁹ Both balancing acts soon ended.

Notes

1. "Duce Out, Italy Becomes Prey of Nazis as Well as Allies," *Newsweek*, 2 August 1943, 19.
2. "Italy's Plight Is Pointed Up by Roosevelt's Bid She Quit," *Newsweek*, 21 June 1943, 62.
3. Allan R. Millet and Williamson Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 126.
4. Philip V. Cannistraro, *The Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 477.
5. "Italy: Loss of Morale," *Current History*, December 1942, 328.
6. Cannistraro, 477.
7. Pietro Badoglio, "Badoglio," *The Commonweal*, 5 November 1943, 61.
8. Millet and Murray, 150.
9. F. H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 85, and Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2, *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943* (1949; new imprint, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 419–31.
10. *Chronology of World War II* (Maxwell Field, Ala.: Air War College, July 1947), 43.
11. Albert N. Garland, "German's Sicilian Defense Line," *Times* (London), 70, and Solly Zuckerman, *From Apes to Warlords* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 196. Zuckerman

echoed Eisenhower's description of Pantelleria being a laboratory, arguing its applicability to "city bombing" would not necessarily hold true "... a perfect curse to us in this manner."

12. *Chronology*, 70.
13. "The Mediterranean: The Hand that Held the Dagger," *Time Magazine*, 21 June 1943, 21.
14. Craven and Cate, 426.
15. *Ibid.*, 431 and 429.
16. *Ibid.*, 432.
17. "The Mediterranean," 21.
18. William J. Donovan, *The William J. Donovan Papers* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Army Military History Institute, n.d.), 1.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, 2.
21. "Operation Torch—Report of Proceedings, Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force," *The Sidney Matthew's Collection* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Army Military History Institute, n.d.), 2. Interestingly, remark 10 of this report relates a standing military tradition: "The mere appearance of a man-o'-war in more than one case was sufficient to cause troops to surrender in the field, and in other cases a few rounds satisfied military honour," which bears strong resemblance to Iraqi soldiers surrendering to an American unmanned aerial vehicle during Operation Desert Storm less than 50 years later.
22. James Parton, *Air Force Spoken Here* (Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler), 416.
23. Frederick C. Painton, "How Mussolini Fell," *Harper's Magazine*, January 1945, 137.
24. Albert N. Garland, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), 270.
25. Garland, "German's Sicilian Defense Line," 4.
26. Garland, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 156–257. Behind the Etna line, the Germans had prepared three more defensive belts. Due to interservice coordination problems, ferries and other transports were able to evacuate the German divisions across the Messina Straits.
27. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Solider of Freedom* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970), 382; George F. Botjer, *Sideshow War: The Italian Campaign 1943–1945* (College Station Tex.: Texas A&M University, 1996), 25, compares well to early press reports "the numbers of prisoners was estimated to be 200,000, but only six to seven thousand were Germans," and "Enemy Losses in Sicily," *Times* (London), 19 August 1943, 4.
28. Botjer, 25.
29. J. Paar-Cabrera, "Men of the Axis Armies," *The Commonweal*, 12 September 1941, 492. Piedmont is the home province of the House of Savoy. It was one of two areas which led the unification of Italy in the nineteenth century. Garibaldi, a revered national hero, led the southern provinces.
30. *Ibid.*
31. David Jablonsky, *Churchill, The Great Game and Total War* (New York: Frank Cass, 1954), 145.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Hinsley, 101.
34. Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 97.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Mussolini recounting to Ambrosio his recent conversation with Hitler, during the train ride from Feltre, on the evening of 19 July 1943 in F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 408.
37. "Italy: Loss of Morale," 328.
38. Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1947), 140–41. Harris does not give the specific missions, but from *Chronology of World War II* Turin was raided eight times beginning on 24 October with the second raid occurring 19 November. However, they appear to be concentrated in three series of two raids on 19 and 21 November, two on 29 and 30 November, and three on 9, 10, and 12 December.
39. OSS Numbered Report #40, 16 Jul 43.

40. Solly Zuckerman, "Strategic Bombing and the Defeat of Germany," *RUSI*, June 1985, 67-76.
41. *Ibid.*, 141.
42. "OSS Numbered Report #33, 11 June 43."
43. *Ibid.*
44. "Italy's Plight Is Pointed Up by Roosevelt's Bid She Quit," *Newsweek*, 58.
45. Ernest R. May, *Lessons of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 142.
46. Stephen Harvey, "The Italian War Effort and the Strategic Bombing of Italy," *History* 70, 1985, 42, and Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1995), 129.
47. Garland, "German's Sicilian Defense Line," 106. This air plan was submitted by the planning staff of North African Tactical Air Forces, coequal to the North African Strategic Air Forces, both subordinate organizations to the NAAF.
48. "Constraints on AAF Operations," Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Historical Research Division, 1969, 11.
49. Maurer I. Maurer, *The U.S. Air Service in World War I* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1978), 251.
50. William "Billy" Mitchell, "Notes on the Multi-motored Bombardment Group Day and Night," United States Army Air Corps, n.d., n.p.
51. Zuckerman, *From Apes to Warlords*, 197. Zuckerman fell under some controversy after the war due to his advocacy of "railway nodes" being seen as synonymous with "city-busting." His book largely condemns the concept of city-busting as ineffective, pointing out the negligible effects of seven million tons of bombs (three times the tonnage dropped on Germany alone) dropped on Vietnam.
52. *Ibid.*, 198.
53. "Personal letter from Eaker to Spaatz," *Spaatz Collection*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 11 September 1943.
54. Lord Arthur Tedder, *Airpower in War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948), 108. This 124-page volume by an air leader instrumental in the air war against Italy in 1943 bears almost no mention of the campaign. Instead, Lord Tedder dwells almost totally on air operations against Germany.
55. Zuckerman, *From Apes to Warlords*, 406.
56. Craven and Cate, 474. They list the principal communications targets, in order of importance, as "San Giovanni, Salerno, Paola, Marina di Catanzaro, Battipaglia, Sapri, Naples on the Tyrrhenian coast, and Rome and Bologna," and Lord Arthur Tedder, *With Prejudice* (London: Cassell and Cassell, 1966), 8. He mentions "a very limited number of main railway centres had practically paralysed the rail system throughout Sicily and Southern Italy."
57. Gaetano Salvemini, 8. "Italy and the Separate Peace," *The New Republic*, 26 October 1942, 540.
58. "Duce Out," 121.
59. *Ibid.*, 120, and "Mussolini," *Encarta*, CD-ROM, Microsoft Inc., 1994.
60. L. Sturzo, "Italy after Mussolini," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1943, 416.
61. Paulo Milano, "Italy on the Eve," *The New Republic*, 17 May 1943, 664.
62. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, eds., *Calculations* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 99 and Milano, 419. Milano claims that the king sometimes wore the Blackshirt of Fascism.
63. Deakin, 32.
64. Donovan, 5.
65. Sturzo, 416.
66. Salvemini, 541.
67. *Ibid.*
68. "The Vatican and the War," *Current History*, December 1941, 347.
69. Anna Lane Lingelbach, "More Privations in Italy," *Current History*, November 1941, 255.

70. Anna Lane Lingelbach, "Tight Belts in Italy," *Current History*, December 1941, 345. Current Italian joke in Rome: "An Englishman spy who wore a German uniform and spoke German perfectly, but was caught because he never carried a package"; and Anna Lane Lingelbach, "An Inside View of Italy," *Current History*, January 1942, 451.

71. Argus, "Behind the Enemy Line," *Nation*, 19 December 1942, 685.

72. Anna Lane Lingelbach, "Italy Turning against Fascism," *Current History*, July 1942, 360-61. Current Italian joke: "What's the difference between Christianity and Fascism? In Christianity, one man sacrificed himself for all. Under Fascism, all sacrifice themselves for one."

73. James Murphy, "The Problem of Power in Italy," *Nineteenth Century*, November 1943, 202. In comparison, Britain had only doubled its money supply during the same period, 487 million pounds in 1939 to 986 million pounds by 1944, and the British had the gold reserves and other tangible assets to back this increase.

74. Reynolds Packard and Eleanor, "Why Italy Hates the Axis," *Science Digest*, April 1943, 58-59.

75. "OSS Numbered Report #36, 24 June 43."

76. Lingelbach, "An Inside View of Italy," 451.

77. "Mussolini," *Encarta*.

78. "Italy's Plight Is Pointed Up by Roosevelt's Bid She Quit," 58.

79. Botjer, 86.

80. Deakin, 399.

81. *Ibid.*, 376-402. "On July 13 he [Hitler] replied to Mussolini's request for aircraft in the following terms: . . . I have decided to continue maintaining the potential of the German air strength in Italy. In July, 220 machines were dispatched, and a further 250 bombers and fighters will follow, as foreseen, by the end of the month. And in addition I have arranged for a further strengthening of the Second Air Fleet by one fighter and seven bomber groups."

82. *Ibid.*, 401-2.

83. *Ibid.*, 423. "Such measures would also ensure the taking over of Italian military commitments on Italian metropolitan territory in the event of a sudden collapse or *coup d'etat*."

84. *Ibid.*, 402-3.

85. *Ibid.*, 404.

86. *Ibid.*, 406 and 375. "As regards Italian requests for war material, Hitler said that a demand for 2,000 aircraft was of course impossible for Germany to honour in practice, and in view of the airfield situation was quite pointless." This was a response to a communiqué by Ambrosio, "I . . . After the experience in Sicily, the problem of Sardinia and Corsica was more or less insoluble, given our inferiority at sea and in the air.' The defence of the Italian mainland required 'immense quantities of equipment and of land and air forces, which we are not capable of getting ready ourselves. One must however consider the need to organize the flow into Italy of German land and air forces (motorized units other than those already arrived, and 2,000 aircraft.'" OSS Numbered Report #31 confirmed this May 13th request as "40 squadrons, 80 batteries of heavy and aircraft guns, and 5 divisions."

87. Howard Smythe, "Interview with General Efsio Marras," 21 December 1948, Army Military History Institute, 1.

88. "OSS Numbered Report #40, 16 July 43."

89. Overy, 41.

90. "Inside Mussolini," *Newsweek*, 24 July 1943, 57. "Matthews obtained the first person narrative from an army doctor called in to treat Mussolini after his arrest. The Duce, who lost nearly 50 pounds, or one-third of his weight in the weeks before his overthrow, told the physician he had suffered from duodenal ulcers for more than twenty years, had hemorrhages or near hemorrhages in 1923, 1929, and on 5 June 1943, and subsisted largely on a diet of milk, fruit, and a little sugar."

91. George Kent, "The Last Days of Dictator Benito Mussolini," *Reader's Digest*, October 1944, 13.

92. *Ibid.*, 407; and Army Military History Institute, 1.

93. *Ibid.*, 407-8.

- 94. "OSS Numbered Report #17, 19 April 43."
- 95. Ibid., 408.
- 96. Ibid., 410.
- 97. "Appeal to Pride," *Times* (London), 19 July 1943, 4.
- 98. "OSS Numbered Report #39, 10 July 43."
- 99. Kent, 13.

Chapter 5

When in Rome

Enclosed is a copy of a report for public release of our raid against military installations at ROME on 19 July 1943. It should prove of particular interest to our air force supporters, but definitely has very little interest from an air force standpoint. It was too easy. Seven other raids are now under study and of these the one on NAPLES is certain to hit them in the eyes, especially the "Sunday-morning quarterbacks."

—Special report from Spaatz to Arnold
27 July 1943

As a result of the decisions made at the Algiers Conference, on 15 June the CCS authorized bombing raids on Rome.¹ Two weeks later Spaatz and Tedder, perhaps under the influence of Zuckerman, while planning support operations for the upcoming Sicilian assault decided to interdict rail yards in both Naples and Rome as part of the overall campaign to disrupt supply and communications in Italy.² In his biography of Spaatz, Richard A. Davis writes "Spaatz suggested that Naples should receive not only bombs but surrender leaflets as well. He did not make clear [in his command dairy] whether he thought this might render the port susceptible to a *coup de main* or prove effective as a psychological ploy in the war against Italian morale."³ Davis goes on to speculate and reveal "Spaatz may have felt that a hard double blow at those two key cities might undermine Italian morale and weaken opposition to the invasion. He noted that if airpower could not be concentrated against those two targets, the entire effort should fall on Sicily itself. In private, Spaatz had earlier expressed great faith in the psychological impact of bombing."⁴

Before the ascendancy of the industrial web theory at ACTS, this concept of the psychological impact of bombing a capital was not entirely incompatible with the earlier ACTS teachings. In lecture number eight, "Air Force Objectives," Muir S. Fairchild (later major general) reasoned that an appropriately timed attack on the political sphere of war was important due to its psychological effects "when it is considered that an air attack upon a nation in the future may well be expected to produce, within a relatively short span of time, a sufficient impression upon national morale to bring about a condition where the general bulk of the population would be opposed to a continuation of hostilities, the attack upon government centers must be given careful consideration, as the political establishment must remain intact if the attitude of the people at large is to be rapidly sensed and given appropriate expression."⁵

Furthermore, this same ACTS lecture contained an important line of reasoning which allowed for the bombing of large urban population centers. "It is well to consider here, that any nation that initiates this type of warfare, might well incur the wrath of world opinion and thus attract the combined military forces of many nations against her. . . . Fortunately, a more desirable and more effective approach is available to an Air Force. It entails the careful selection of certain material targets that can be readily destroyed and upon which the social life of the nation depends for its existence."⁶ These material targets included food supplies, public utilities, industry, and lines of communication.⁷ Cutting railway networks such as marshaling yards in a large city would impact all these material targets.

From a doctrinal standpoint, "only a short final step was needed to tie the economic destruction to the Clausewitzian dictum which called for the destruction of the will to resist."⁸ Even after the blitzkrieg of Poland, the ACTS lectures maintained that destroying some vital center would lead to economic collapse and the loss of will.⁹ Some JIC reports gave full argument to this strategy: "It is the aim of our strategic bombing to destroy the economic and industrial structure of Germany and the endurance and capacity to work of her population."¹⁰ Nevertheless, in order to justify these urban attacks politically, members of the air staff argued that industrial workers, just like material targets, had to be rendered ineffective. Therefore, morale was also key to effective economic warfare.¹¹

In a letter to Arnold, dated 14 July, Spaatz explained that he had run out of targets for his medium and heavy bombers on Sicily, and it was now time for the decisive blow which he trusted would be accurate enough to avoid collateral damage.

The accuracy of bombing by heavies and mediums has been on an ascending scale, and reached an epitome in the bombing of Catania [town on the eastern coast of Sicily] airdrome yesterday by two heavy groups. In the photographic coverage, we can find only three bombs which fell out of the airdrome area. Needless to say, one of the few remaining airdromes which they had for operating in Sicily is now inactive. . . . Commencing tomorrow, efforts will go into Italy against Naples, Foggia, and later Rome. The attacks planned will be on a large scale and if the same accuracy of bombing is obtained as heretofore, may well be decisive.¹²

Thanks to the rapid success of Husky, the bombers of the NASAF, commanded by Maj Gen James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle, were available for mainland operations on that critical day of 19 July.

The Rome Raid

For the first time in the war, Allied airpower bombed Rome.¹³ In fact, at 1113 hours on 19 July 1943 Spaatz sent almost the entire NASAF against Rome, just as General Marshall suggested at Trident.¹⁴ This was the largest single bombing raid in history to date, and more than 540 aircraft dropped 1,000 tons of bombs on four target areas (table 1).¹⁵

Table 1
First Rome Raid Summary

TARGET SET	FORMATIONS	AIRCRAFT	TONNAGE/LOSSES
Lorenzo Marshaling yards	4 Groups B-17	149	441 tons, 0 lost
Littorio Marshaling yards	5 Groups B-24	143	254 tons, 0 lost
Littorio airfield	2 Groups B-25	~ 60	1 lost
Ciampinos airfield	3 Groups B-26	~ 90	1 lost
Escorts for airfield attacks	6 Squadrons P-38	~ 90	0 lost

As directed by Spaatz, four Wellingtons from RAF 205 Group dropped 864,000 leaflets on the night of 18/19 July to warn the Romans of a coming attack.¹⁶ Even with the Italian defenses forewarned, Allied aircraft losses on this raid were extremely light. "Not more than thirty Axis planes attacked, none of them aggressively, while flak was heavy and accurate only over the Ciampinos."¹⁷ This is in marked contrast to the smaller Regensburg-Schweinfurt raids performed by Eighth Air Force later in August and October 1943 which suffered horrendous losses, 19 and 26 percent, respectively; or the 1 August Ploesti raid with losses of 31 percent.¹⁸

Reconnaissance on 24 July showed that the B-17s, assigned the sensitive Lorenzo marshaling yards target in the heart of Rome, "had placed many hits in the Lorenzo yards, causing widespread and severe damage to tracks, rolling stock, installations, and nearby industrial plants."¹⁹ At the Littorio marshaling yards north of Rome, B-24s achieved 44 hits, smashed or burned out a large amount of rolling stock and put five direct hits on the main line to Florence.²⁰ Both Crane and Hosmer claim that factory workers fled or failed to show up, providing the first evidence that the Romans did not have their hearts in the war.²¹ (See fig. 2.)

In conjunction with the Naples raid two days earlier on the 17th, where 77 B-24s, 97 B-17s, and 179 B-26s dropped 650 tons, the effects on the railway network were militarily significant.²² "The two attacks produced a gap of some two hundred miles in the Italian railroad system between points north of Rome and south of Naples and prevented for at least several days the movement of Axis troops and supplies by rail from central to southern Italy."²³ Based on NAAF studies of the damage to Catania marshaling yards in Sicily that "were so completely demolished that even if material were available, it would take months to clear the wreckage and rebuild them,"²⁴ Spaatz wrote in an official letter to Assistant Secretary of War for Air Robert Lovett arguing that the marshaling yards of Naples and Rome should have had similar results.²⁵



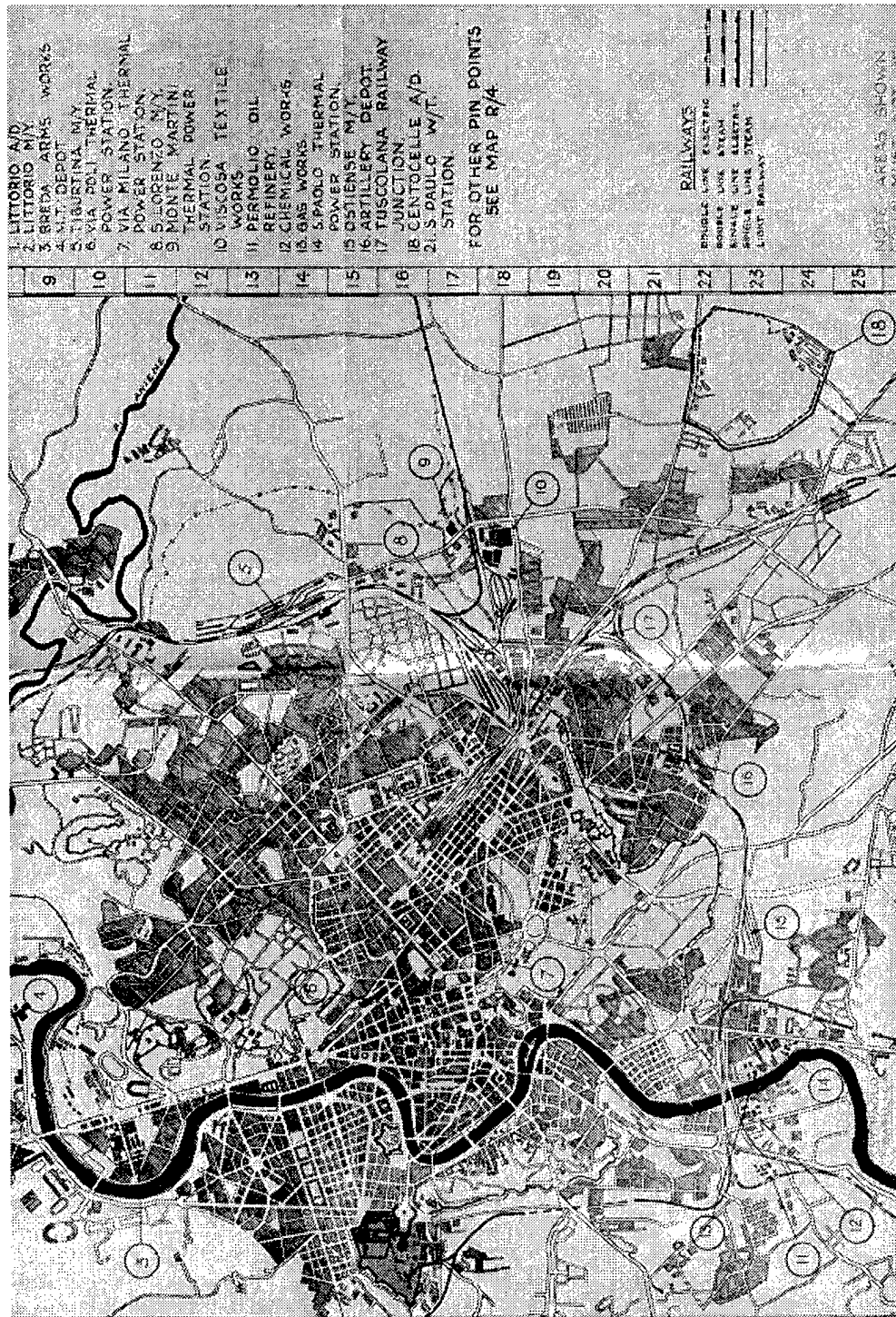
Source: Craven and Cate, 457.

Figure 2. Rome after Aerial Bombardment

Damage to nonmilitary targets and civilians in Rome was minimal as aircrews were especially careful. (See maps 2 and 3 titled Targets and Sensitive Areas in Rome and Enlargement of Central Rome, respectively.) One group commander wrote, "I never briefed [air]crews quite as carefully and flew a bombing run through flak as meticulously as on this raid."²⁶ Some

Map 2

Targets and Sensitive Areas in Rome



Source: Air Force Historical Research Agency.

Enlargement of Central Rome

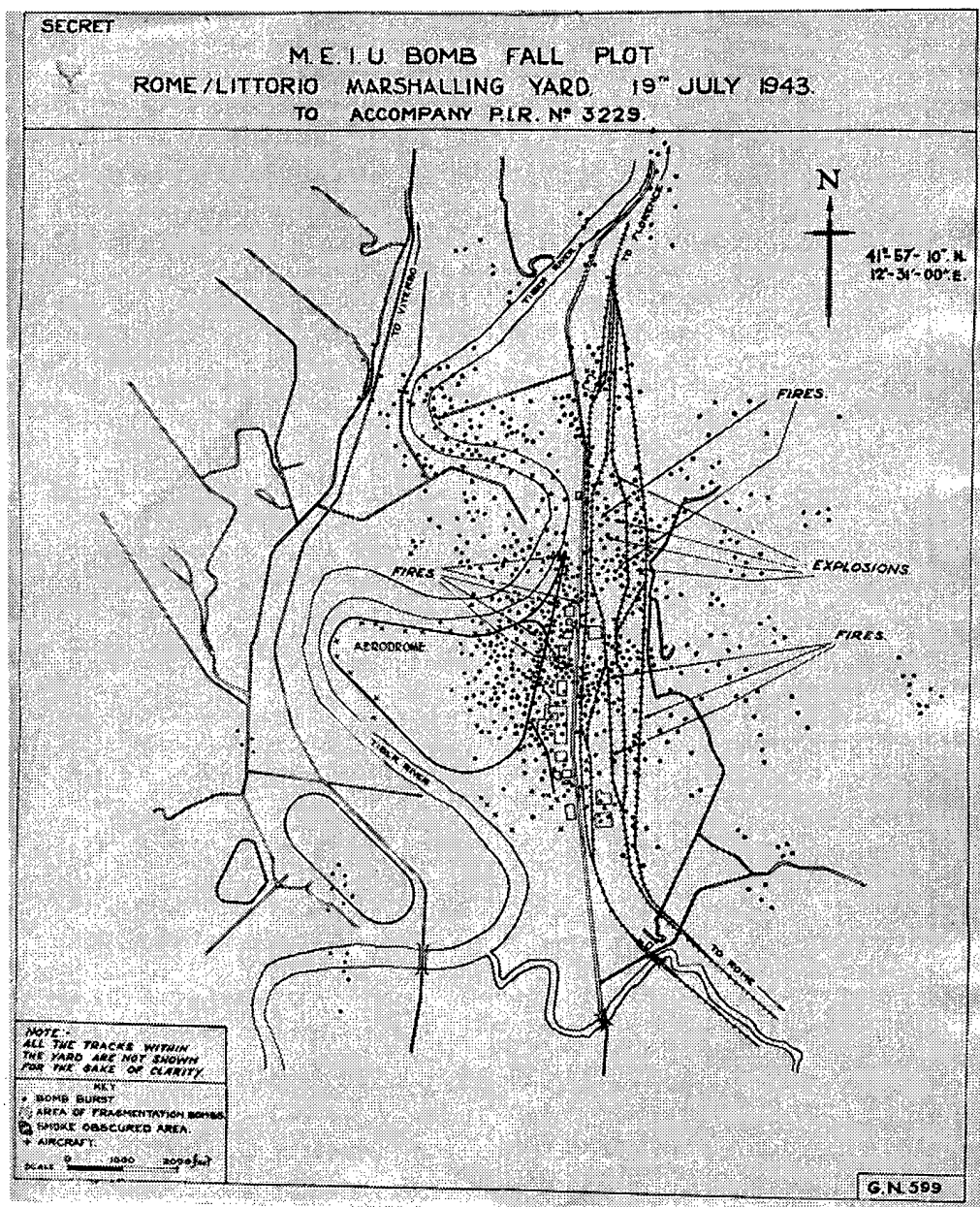


Source: Air Force Historical Research Agency.

stray bombs fell in the Verano cemetery and others hit the Basilica of San Lorenzo, located eight hundred yards from the rail yards, producing slight damage.²⁷ Judging from the dispersion of bombs from the raid on the Littorio marshaling yards, this minor amount of collateral damage was remarkable. (See map 4 titled, Daylight Precision Bombing, Littorio Marshaling Yards.)

Map 4

Daylight Precision Bombing, Littorio Marshaling Yards



Source: Air Force Historical Research Agency.

After three days of recovery operations, Fascist officials recorded civilian casualties at 717 dead, but rumors had the actual count at least twice that figure.²⁸ One eyewitness said that "in a tramcar fellow passengers assured me that the victims amounted to more than ten thousand. According to them, the government placed the figure at several hundred in order not to throw greater responsibility on itself. Insistently they repeated, 'The Allies gave warning that the people of Rome should stay far from the railway stations. Why didn't the government tell us that?'"²⁹ There was still no water in the summer heat, as government rescue workers continued to pull the dead from the ruins.³⁰ No civilians helped in the cleanup, standing by and uttering insults and ironic statements, reasoning that any aid would only help Mussolini.³¹ Ironically, citizens in Turin and other northern cities received the news of the raid with silent joy, "delighted to learn the Fascist officials and refugees in Rome were getting their medicine at last."³²

In contrast to Italian public opinion which blamed Mussolini, the commander of the NASAF, General Doolittle, who flew in the copilot's seat of the lead B-17 attacking Lorenzo, thought the American and British press gave the military more trouble than the German and Italian propaganda over the slight collateral damage on this raid.³³ The *New York Times* report two days later was apologetic about the raid on the cradle of Western civilization, trying to equate the raid to any other attack on a European capital.³⁴

However, much of the real damage of the Rome raid was inflicted upon Mussolini. All those loci of power in Rome could now focus on a war brought to the capital city. Although Donovan reported in early 1942 that "there is, however, an almost total absence of revolutionary leadership or organization."³⁵ By July 1943 the situation had changed due to the stress of war. "On 19 July, the day of the bombardment of Rome and the return from Feltre, in the words of Anfuso, the foreign undersecretary, 'the conspiracy took definite shape: each character put on his mask and came onto the stage.'"³⁶ On 25 July one Italian analyst claimed that the Italian collapse was impossible, because of "the diabolical cleverness of a modern authoritarian regime. There is nothing that the people can do. Those who have arms are under military discipline in the Army or the blackshirt militia. The rest are unarmed."³⁷ In fact, Rome was not without those who were now willing and able to seek change, armed with only their wits and will.

The Pope

When the time comes to remove Mussolini and his henchmen, the King and the House of Savoy, the army, the Vatican will remain to make negotiations possible. Thus, since Italy is blessed not only with a King and with a Duce, but also with a Pope, the Pope also will throw Mussolini overboard and bring about a separate peace.

—Gaetano Salvemini
The New Republic

"To Roman-born patrician Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XII, bombing Rome differs from bombing any other city."³⁸ The pope had asked President Roosevelt to use his influence to prevent the bombing of Rome as it "might turn the entire Catholic world against the attackers."³⁹ The pope allegedly told an OSS source with "wide political experience" that his holiness was "frightened by the wholesale bombings of Italian cities and by the expectation of an [A]llied attack."⁴⁰ With that special concern, Pope Pius XII also visited the bombed areas and the damaged Basilica of San Lorenzo. On his arrival, a large crowd immediately surrounded his car, shouting "Pace! Pace!" (Peace! Peace!) and "Aiuta!" (Help!), as he attempted to access the damage.⁴¹ The pope stayed for more than an hour.⁴²

Later, in a propaganda attempt, the *Giornale d'Italia* falsely reported that "the ancient Basilica of San Lorenzo, built in the fourth century by the Emperor Constantine and containing the tombs of many Popes, has been destroyed. The large cemetery of Campo Verano, with its many ecclesiastical buildings and chapels, was hit by many bombs."⁴³ With firsthand knowledge of the damage, the pope was able to dispel, in a subsequent Vatican radio broadcast, the Axis propaganda which claimed that the Basilica had been destroyed.⁴⁴ Even in better times, the Italian people found the pope much more believable than any government propaganda.

The pope, although cautious with Vatican neutrality, now stepped closer to the line when calling for peace. Responding to Roosevelt's April call for the Italians to rise up in revolt, Pius XII only warned, "Salvation and justice are not to be found in revolution, but in evolution through concord."⁴⁵ On 21 July, in a long letter to Cardinal Francesco Marchetti-Selvaggiani, his vicar-general in charge of the clergy of Rome, the Holy See summarized his letter's first section in this paragraph: "Consider that hate never was the mother of peace, and that resentment provoked by vast and unnecessary destruction delays and renders less stable and less serene the day of a peaceful understanding, which cannot persist in the humiliation of the vanquished, but which is founded only on fraternal agreement which conciliates and moderates passion and bitterness."⁴⁶ This is a call to Romans to humbly recognize defeat, and not to delay its inevitability with sinful hate. The pope closes his letter's appeal with "we address with paternal insistence this appeal to pray to God that he will hasten the hour of his mercy, when arms are laid aside and souls have once again found the light, and when the joy of true peace shines over a confused world."⁴⁷

Although both the Allies and the Germans used this letter for propaganda, such was the craft of its construction, it seems a neutral call for world peace. Yet, consider the letter's recipient and his duties to pass on this message to his bishops, and they to their parish priests. Consider the dire predicament of Italy and the preponderance of devoted followers in Rome who look daily to the Holy Father for guidance. This appeal for immediate peace was less likely to fall on deaf ears in Rome, and it certainly would be repeated in many forms to the faithful attending mass throughout Rome and Italy. The Vatican and the people of Rome would be ready for any change that might bring peace.

The King

Modern dictatorships can of course be destroyed from outside, by foreign armies, but they can be destroyed from within only when their instruments of power no longer obey them.

—Argus, the code-name of a reporter in Rome
Nation

Like the pope, the royal family also visited the destruction in Rome.⁴⁸ The *Times* (London) reported that Rome radio stated that the "King of Italy visited the stricken districts immediately after the raid on Rome. Queen Helen also went to the bombed areas and visited injured persons who had been taken to hospitals in Rome."⁴⁹ The people treated the royal family, accustomed to a friendly regard by their subjects, with far less respect than the pope. People flung foul curses and made obscene gestures, shouting "*Cornuto!*" at Victor Emmanuel and "*Putana!*" at his daughter, who stayed close by his side.⁵⁰ "Not since the days of political turmoil and labor riots following World War I had the king encountered such public anger. Even then, it had not been directed at him personally. American bombs had brought the war to the royal doorstep in more ways than one. They revealed that he was reviled as a leading author of the country's misfortunes."⁵¹ Perhaps the king did not feel as culpable as the crowd made him to be, but surely Victor Emmanuel and the monarchy were as much under threat as Mussolini and fascism.

May concludes in a short analysis of the Italian surrender that the Rome bombing caused the king to make the decision to desert Mussolini, citing that "according to the King's closest confidant, Gen Paolo Puntoni, it was the bombing which precipitated these events."⁵² It cannot be certain whether it was the extent of the bomb damage, or the people's vehemence shown to him which moved the king most. Regardless of the reason, the king's critical decision permitted the subsequent chain of events which ended in the signature of the armistice in September.

In contrast, Deakin, in his book-length historical analysis entitled the *Brutal Friendship*, reaches a different conclusion than May. The central proposition of Deakin's work is that Mussolini's failure to obtain military aid at Feltre was responsible for Mussolini's ouster by the Fascist Grand Council. Deakin speculates that the king made a preliminary decision to eliminate Mussolini on the evening of the 19th after meeting with General Ambrosio and Colonel Montezemolo, a military aide, who possibly met with the king immediately upon their return from Feltre.⁵³ Even if this evening meeting took place, as Ambrosio remembers 12 years after the fact,⁵⁴ earlier that day the king had already visited the damaged areas and seen the dead from the Rome raid. As May suggests in the Puntoni citation, the king may have made up his mind before hearing of Mussolini's failure at Feltre.

The king met with Mussolini at the palace on 20 July, the day after the Rome raid and Feltre meeting. At this meeting, he tried to induce Mussolini

to resign. According to Albert N. Garland, the king told Puntoni the gist of his long discussion: "I tried to make the Duce understand that now it is only his person, the target of enemy propaganda and the focal point of public opinion, which impedes an internal revival and which prevents a clear definition of our military situation. He did not understand and he did not wish to understand. It was if I had spoken to the wind."⁵⁵ After this meeting, the king knew that Mussolini must go.

In agreement with Garland, Deakin acknowledges that the king certainly made up his mind to remove Mussolini by 22 July and planned to arrest him when he next met with Il Duce on the 26th.⁵⁶ Deakin cites of other accounts which suggest both 20 July and 21 July as the dates by which the king had directed Duke Acquarone to organize events for the coup:

According to [General] Castellano, Acquarone [duke, king's intermediary] had told him on July 20 that the King had decided to bring in Badoglio "within six or seven days." The Duce would be probably arrested at the customary royal audience on Monday, July 26.⁵⁷

Two days later, on July 21, Acquarone again sent for Senise [chief of police], and told him that the King had decided "to carry out the coup d'etat." Badoglio would be head the new government, which would consist of senior officers and civil servants. The Germans were to be told that Italy would continue the war.⁵⁸

The legitimacy of the king, who technically Mussolini served, was important to removing the dictator from office. The king's allies were growing and Mussolini's were about to desert him.

Moreover, even without Mussolini, surrender was not possible "unless the Italian Army receives orders to lay down arms from an authority it considers competent to issue such orders."⁵⁹ The king's former constitutional role as head of the military was also critical, if it could be reinstated. Regardless of whether the king was most influenced by the Rome bombing as May suggests, or Mussolini's poor performance at Feltre as Deakin believes was more critical, events were coming to a head as other centers of influence and power drove the Italians to seek a way out of the war.

The Fascist Grand Council

Let all parties perish, ours along with the others, so long as the country is safe.

—Dino Grandi
22 July 1943

On the morning of 21 July, Dino Grandi (duke, and president of the Chamber), who had been abstaining from politics in protest since June, called on Scorza (secretary of the Fascist Party).⁶⁰ Scorza told him that upon Mussolini's return from Feltre, the Duce had bowed to repeated requests and ordered a meeting of the Grand Council of Fascism for 24 July at five o'clock.⁶¹ For three years there had been no meeting of the Fascist Grand Council, but Il Duce's reason was obvious as after Feltre he had a harsh pill to feed Italy.⁶²

Grandi showed Scorza a three-page motion to return control of the army to the monarchy. Basically, Grandi felt the regime was out of joint because of the Duce's political method (or lack of method) of maintaining control of the military. Placing military control back in royal hands would not be revolutionary, but would be done to correct the faulty application of Fascist power.⁶³

Grandi went about Rome generating support for his document from the other Fascist leaders. He did not press for a meeting with Mussolini, but due to both Italian and German machinations, he was summoned before the Duce on 22 July at four o'clock.⁶⁴ Allotted 15 minutes, the meeting lasted almost two hours, while Field Marshal Albrecht Kesselring waited impatiently in the lobby. Several accounts of this meeting exist, differing on content and the level of anger that existed between the two long-time Fascist rivals.⁶⁵ The meeting ended with Mussolini unwilling to hand command over to anyone, but Grandi was free to present his motion to the Grand Council.⁶⁶

Adding to the fear of more bombings and imminent invasion of the mainland, the meeting of the Fascist Grand Council on the 24th gave the public "the feeling of the political crisis."⁶⁷ "Some people stayed by their radios anxious to hear any results that the meeting might have. Others, too nervous to remain silently at home, stood about the street corners discussing every possibility. They asked one another whether the meeting would end in a successful coup d'etat or whether it would merely mark the beginning of a horrible period of killing and persecution."⁶⁸ Indeed, the 27 Fascist leaders also expected trouble, some taking the unusual precaution of bringing concealed pistols and grenades to the council.⁶⁹ They had good reason, as Mussolini was nervous as well. "In the halls immediately outside the room and at the doors about 60 men stood with fixed bayonets. These men, the toughest in Italy, were the *Moschettieri del Duce*—Musketeers of the Duce. They were pledged to support Mussolini to their death, and obeyed only him. A word from the man on the throne, and Grandi and his supporters would speak no more."⁷⁰ Before sitting down all raised their arms in the Fascist salute—and the Fascist Grand Council was in session.

Mussolini opened the meeting and spoke for two hours, discussing the military situation and talk of surrender, but he did not once mention the recent talks with the Germans.⁷¹ He ranted over the easy surrender of Pantelleria, "I invented Pantelleria. . . . I ordered it made impregnable. . . . 'At the end,' he added ironically, 'we had sixty dead and 11,000 [sic] prisoners—and that island could have been the Stalingrad of the Mediterranean.'"⁷² He complained that everyone in Sicily had deserted their posts, despite his orders that "all be shot who abandoned their posts." He cried, "but only one militiamen was shot."⁷³

White-bearded General De Bono (quadrumvir of the March on Rome) rose to defend the army, but agreed that Italy must resist, but "Has Italy the means? How are the aviation and the fleet?"⁷⁴ Mussolini gave a swift answer to the status and losses of the fleet, again attributing any failures to those who did not follow his directives. "Significantly he ignored the request for

information about aviation."⁷⁵ Bottai (member-at-large) rose and said he would not discuss the military situation, as it was hopeless now, but "it is our fault for not demanding in the past three years that a Grand Council be convened."⁷⁶

A little after seven o'clock, Grandi saw his chance. He agreed that the council was mostly a civil group and not qualified to discuss military matters. Tension rose sharply as it was now evident that this meeting had another purpose than to review the military situation. Turning to Mussolini, he said, "What I am about to say, you already know, because I said it to you two days ago."⁷⁷ Grandi then spoke for over an hour, "urging that Mussolini had outlived his usefulness, and that the command of the armies be restored to the King."⁷⁸ According to Grandi, "my calculation was that it would hearten them to know that a man could say such things to Mussolini and two days later be still alive!"⁷⁹

Grandi then offered his motion to return constitutional authority to the parliament and the king. A hot debate ensued with Farinacci, who proposed a ready amendment which would defuse Grandi's intent.⁸⁰ Mussolini said that the meeting was not accomplishing anything, that it was getting late, and then tried to adjourn the meeting. To this, Grandi sprang up and said, "time did not matter when Italian soldiers were . . . dying in battlefields of Sicily, let us work out a solution."⁸¹ They all agreed to a short break around midnight, and Grandi garnered more signatures to his motion.⁸²

The debate continued after the break. It was evident that Mussolini was listless and unable to address his failure to obtain German aid at Feltre, only assuring eventual victory.⁸³ "Words, only words!" shouted Grandi. "We know you asked for 3000 planes. He offered you 300."⁸⁴ Tensions rose higher. At one point De Bono drew his pistol and pointed at Il Duce, after an insult to the army, only to be pulled down by Count Galeazzo Ciano and Bottai.⁸⁵ Mussolini, now calmer, said, "suppose the government begs the King to take over? What will the King reply? Let's admit he will accept both the military and the political power. The question remains: What will I do? Will I accept being decapitated? I am now sixty and I know what these things mean."⁸⁶ Loyal Scorza got up at this point, seemingly to fetch the *Moschettieri del Duce*, but returned alone as he only had to use the lavatory. Seeing the relief on everyone's face that their lives were not in jeopardy, Grandi seized the moment. "*Votare!* [we will vote]"⁸⁷

At 2:40 a.m. on Sunday, 25 July 1943, Grandi handed Mussolini the pre-signed motion containing 19 signatures.⁸⁸ "*Va Bene* [very well]," said Mussolini, and directed Scorza to take the first and last vote ever held in the Fascist Grand Council.⁸⁹ The motion passed 19 to 7, with one abstention. According to Deakin, "Mussolini rose and said, 'You have provoked the crisis of the regime. The session is closed.' Scorza attempted to call for the ritual salute to the Duce, who checked him, saying, 'No, you are excused,' and retired to his private study."⁹⁰ Perhaps for the first and only time in history, a dictator had allowed himself to be voted out of office.

Like the king, at least 19 of these men, loyal to Mussolini and Fascism for over 20 years, knew that it was time for Il Duce to go. Many, including Ciano and De Bono, would pay with their lives for their vote. A defeated Mussolini, however, seemed to know it was over too, as he allowed the vote to happen when it was in his power to do otherwise.

The Coup d' Etat

A dictator like Mussolini cannot be dismissed and return to private life like the president of a democratic republic. He cannot even flee abroad. No country would receive him. He must either remain where he is or be executed.

—Gaetano Salvemini
The New Republic

Grandi lost no time and went straight to Villa Savoia to report to the king in the early hours of 25 July.⁹¹ He was also loyal to the king, in February of 1943 receiving from the king the Knighthood of the Annunziata—the highest decoration in Italy—just as Mussolini was setting him up for execution on the charges of treachery.⁹² Grandi dutifully related all that occurred at the council, as well as suggesting the possibility that Mussolini might try to rule without the monarchy. Additionally, he warned of a possible German coup d'etat as well.⁹³ Grandi was bowed out and the king and Duke Acquarone conferred. The king charged Duke Acquarone to become the “chief conspirator to make a trap to catch Mussolini before civil war could be precipitated.”⁹⁴

The duke summoned General Ambrosio and told him of the peril of civil war. After the events of the Grand Council, “Acquarone now told [Ambrosio], after talking to the king in the early hours of Sunday, 25 July, that this moment had arrived.”⁹⁵ Ambrosio swore to support the House of Savoy.⁹⁶ “Returning to his home, Ambrosio summoned General Angelo Ceriga, commander of the famous Carabinieri, a state constabulary composed of discharged army veterans and supposedly nonpolitical. Ceriga had succeeded General Hazon, who had been killed in the bombing of Rome on July 19th. ‘In the name of His Majesty the King’ said Ambrosio, ‘I order you to arrest Benito Mussolini today at four o’clock.’ General Ceriga acquiesced.”⁹⁷

In a twist of ironic fate, General Hazon, “who was both loyal to Ambrosio, and had formerly served under Badoglio in Africa,” was killed by the event which contributed to the crisis which the Carabinieri was supposed to prevent.⁹⁸

The king was scheduled to meet with Mussolini on 26 July at their customary Monday meeting. Shortly after noon on the 25th, Mussolini accelerated events by requesting a meeting with the king for 5 p.m. on Sunday. Puntoni told Mussolini’s secretary that the king would see Il Duce at 4 p.m.⁹⁹ Unaware of the conspiracy, Mussolini took no measures to prevent a coup. He only informed the commander of the ever-faithful Fascist Militia that he intended to talk with the king, disband the Grand Council and then

denounce its members. "He seems to have felt that he could bully King Victor Emmanuel and have his way."¹⁰⁰ Mussolini then spent the morning and afternoon touring through the bombed out San Lorenzo district.¹⁰¹

Once more in command of the regular army, thanks to the passage of Grandi's resolution the night before, the king now had the ability to dispose of Il Duce. Fifty Carabinieri with automatic weapons arrived at the Villi Savoia and hid themselves in the bushes to destroy Mussolini's private bodyguard if necessary.¹⁰² The king summoned General Puntoni at three o'clock and told him that at the conclusion of the interview he had authorized the arrest of Mussolini "outside Villi Savoia." He also asked General Puntoni to "stand by the door of the drawing-room where we shall retire to talk. You can then intervene if need arises" as the king was unsure how Mussolini would react.¹⁰³ In a three-car motorcade, Mussolini arrived at five o'clock.¹⁰⁴

Deakin records that there are several versions of this meeting. From Mussolini's own memoirs, clearly he did not anticipate the king's drastic actions. At the end of a short "shuffling and embarrassed dialogue" by Mussolini on the military situation and the results of the Grand Council meeting, the king asked the Duce for his resignation. The king said that he had arranged for Badoglio to succeed him, and that "he was in fact practically in office."¹⁰⁵ There was silence in the room, "broken only by a phrase which the King had repeated several times during the course of the conversation: 'I am sorry, I am sorry, but the solution could not have been otherwise.' The audience ended in silence."¹⁰⁶ According to the account given by Deakin, Mussolini did not come to the Villa Savoia to bully anyone.¹⁰⁷

Mussolini was a broken man.¹⁰⁸ The Duce was seen to the front steps, but his car had been removed, his chauffeur placed in the telephone room, and his attendant security staff arrested. A military police captain barred Mussolini's way and said, "His Majesty has ordered me to protect your person."¹⁰⁹ He then led Il Duce to an ambulance parked in the drive of Villa Savoia. Mussolini, known for his emotional bearing, calmly got into the waiting ambulance and was driven to Puntoni (a small island near Rome).¹¹⁰ En route "Mussolini, who had preached the idea of living dangerously, said nervously, 'He drives too fast.' The captain spoke to the driver, who thereupon increased the speed. . . . 'You forget,' he said plaintively, 'that I am an old man of sixty.'"¹¹¹

"In such a manner the ruler of Italy for over twenty years was abducted abruptly and without trace from the public scene."¹¹² According to one observer in the Vatican, "it took just one bombing and one threat of invasion to bring about the downfall of Mussolini."¹¹³ Although that may be true, it also took a king with legitimacy, circumstances, and loyal followers to depose him. The loyalty of the armed services to the king, their constitutional leader, was important—the *Regia Esercito*, *Regia Marina*, and *Regia Aeronautica*.¹¹⁴ It also took the mood of the people.

The people briefly rejoiced, thinking that Italy was virtually out of the war.¹¹⁵ Victor Emmanuel himself announced on radio at 11:30 p.m. that Mussolini had been dismissed.¹¹⁶ "When news of Mussolini's dismissal raced through the city on 25 July, people embraced each other in joy, danced in the

streets, and paraded in gratitude to the king."¹¹⁷ Crowds which shouted "Long live free Italy! Long live the king!" attempted to destroy the office of the *Giornale d'Italia* and threw rocks at Mussolini's palace, while anxious German soldiers fled to their barracks.¹¹⁸ Pictures of Il Duce were tossed out of the windows. The supply of wine was exhausted.¹¹⁹ Off duty fireman were called to work so they could immediately remove all Fascist symbols from public places. "By 2 a.m., a huge throng of 50,000 gathered in St. Peter's Square, where people shouted, 'Evviva Il Papa!'"¹²⁰ Catholic meetings were called on Sunday to demonstrate support for the Badoglio government.¹²¹

In Milan, Italy's second largest city where Mussolini had plotted his 1922 march on Rome, the Milanese ignored martial law and posted antiwar postures and freed political prisoners, as thousands of armament factory workers went on strike.¹²² The trams got so crowded they could not circulate and people shouted, "Peace, Peace, Badoglio will give us peace."¹²³ Ironically, an angry crowd of Milanese even attacked German antiaircraft gun crews.¹²⁴ In Turin, an arsenal city and ancestral home of the House of Savoy, people wore symbols of peace. In Bologna workmen jailed a Fascist leader for prohibiting public assembly of more than three persons.¹²⁵ The next day, the king of Italy addressed the people, "Italy, through the valour of her troops and the determination of her civilian population, will again find, in the respect of her old institutions that always helped her rise, the road to ascent."¹²⁶ Peace seemed at hand, but it was not to be. Yet, at least Il Duce was gone.

Certainly all four events, the disaster in Russia, the poor defense of Sicily, the failure at Feltre to obtain the requested German military aid, and the Rome raid, contributed to breaking the spirit of Mussolini. The bombing may have directly contributed to Mussolini's failure at Feltre, which, besides the material effects of the destruction in the "Eternal City," gave proof to all of Italy's defenselessness. Mussolini's thoughts must have been dark after a sleepless night, disposed by his own Grand Council of Fascism, while touring for hours the bombed area of San Lorenzo, waiting for his appointed hour before the king.

In turn, Mussolini's growing dark paralysis was assuredly a factor in the king's choice to dispose him. Nevertheless, as a minimum, the direct insult of Rome bombing, according to General Puntoni was key to the king's decision. The king was the key to the end of Fascism in Italy. For all their ineptness and misfortune at war, the Italians had neatly rid themselves of both Mussolini and Fascism without a drop of blood being shed in civil war. The withdrawal from the war would be more expensive.

Notes

1. "Official letter from Spaatz to Arnold," AFHRC file no. 168.491 and Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2, *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943* (1949; new imprint, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 465. Richard A. Davis suggests in his biography of Spaatz (262) that Spaatz thought airpower detractors would counter the Rome success with the lack of "surrender" in Naples. This author thinks either the leaflet plans changed or Spaatz may have Rome confused with Naples as leaflets were only dropped on the former, not the latter as

Spaatz suggests in Davis, 261 cited in note 3. The latter possibility of Spaatz confusion seems unlikely, but the Naples raid should not hit anyone in the eyes as the citation suggests, despite Davis's speculation of how Spaatz said the Naples raid, let alone the first Rome raid, might be used.

2. Richard A. Davis, *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1993), 261.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Muir S. Fairchild, "ACTS Lectures: Air Force Objectives," Air Corps Tactical School, 1934-1935, 8.

6. Ibid., 3.

7. Ibid., 4.

8. Thomas A. Fabyanic, "Strategic Air Attack in the United States Air Force: A Case Study," Maxwell AFB, Ala., 1976, 42.

9. Ibid., 42-43.

10. "Effects of Bombing Offensive of German War Effort, Reports by the Joint Intelligence Subcommittee," J.I.C. (43) 294, 22 July 1943, and William J. Donovan, *The William J. Donovan Papers*, J.I.C. reports 5, vol. 185, Carlisle Barracks, Army Military History Institute, n.d., 1.

11. R. J. Overy, *The Air War, 1939-1945* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 106.

12. "Personal letter from Spaatz to Arnold," dated 14 July 1943, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

13. F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Fascism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 406.

14. Craven and Cate, 463. Operationally speaking, this raid was preceded by the Naples raid of 363 heavies and mediums on the 17th. Tactically, this raid may have been a warm up for aircrews unused to urban bombing raids as well as a convenience in the planning of missions or an operational pause in the air support of Husky. Psychologically speaking, this pattern may have enhanced the effect on Rome. This one-two punch pattern was again seen on the intended Naples raid of 1 August and Rome raid of 3 August. As will be discussed later in chapter 5, the 3 August raid was delayed until 13 August, but still had an effect.

15. Kit C. Carter and Robert Mueller, *Combat Chronology, 1941-1945* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1991), 162; Craven and Cate, 464-65; Stephen Harvey, "The Italian War Effort and the Strategic Bombing of Italy," *History* 70, 40; James H. Doolittle, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again* (New York: Bantam Books), 359; and "Constraints on AAF Operations," Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Historical Research Division, 1969, 12.

16. "Constraints," 11.

17. Craven and Cate, 681-83, 702-5. Losses given as a percentage of aircraft which bombed their targets. The first raid on 17 August lost 60 B-17s. Of the 376 aircraft dispatched, only 315 actually attacked their targets. Two months later, in the culmination of six days of sustained bombing, the Eighth made a second raid on 14 October. In addition to 17 aircraft with major damage and 121 with minor damage, the Eighth lost 60 more B-17s out of the 291 bombers dispatched. Losses combined with early returns resulted in only 228 B-17s bombing their targets. Moreover, within this span of six days in October, the Eighth lost 148 bombers and crews, approximately 50 percent of its operational aircraft, in four attempts to break through German defenses. This created the "Autumn Crisis" of the combined bombing offensive. The Ploesti raid lost 54 B-24s out of the 177 sortied.

18. Craven and Cate, 464.

19. Ibid.

20. Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 94; and Stephen T. Hosmer, *Psychological Effects of U.S. Air Operations in Four Wars 1941-1991: Lessons for U.S. Commanders* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1962), 15, which both cited Ernest R. May, "Lessons" of the Past: *The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 128. In the May text, this evidence is in a separate paragraph from the Rome raid. Furthermore, May does not offer a citation for this evidence, nor does he specifically relate these effects on civilians directly to the first Rome raid. More likely, as there

were no factory targets hit in Rome, May was referring to the effects seen in northern Italy, which were discussed by Harvey. If this reasoning is correct, then Crane and Hosmer do not provide a true picture of the Rome raid effects on civilians.

21. Harvey, 40.
22. Craven and Cate, 464.
23. "Official letter from Spaatz to Mr. Lovell" dated 20 August 1943, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
24. Ibid.
25. Crane, 94.
26. "Constraints," 12. Doolittle records that it was not hit, but suffers only some blast damage. Doolittle, 359.
27. Harvey, 41.
28. Boguslaw Kuchyinsky, "The Night Il Duce Fell," ed. Alan Moats, *Collier's*, 19 February 1944, 13.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. "OSS Numbered Report #43, 30 July 43," *Roosevelt Map Room Military Subject Files* (Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1991).
32. Doolittle, 360.
33. George F. Botjer, *Sideshow War: The Italian Campaign 1943-1945* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M, 1996), 87.
34. Donovan, sec. 1-20.2.
35. Deakin, 424.
36. Herbert L. Matthews, "Will-Can-Italy Collapse?" *New York Times Magazine*, 25 July 1943, 5.
37. Gaetano Salvemini. "Italy and the Separate Peace," *New Republic*, 26 October 1942, 540; and "The Mediterranean: The Hand that Held the Dagger," *Time Magazine*, 21 June 1943, 27.
38. "The Vatican and the War," *Current History*, December 1941, 347.
39. "OSS Numbered Report #17, 19 April 43," 1991.
40. Botjer, 85.
41. "King of Italy Sees Bombed Areas," *Times* (London), 20 July 1943, 4.
42. Ibid.
43. "Vatican Refutes Axis Lies," *Times* (London), 26 July 1943, 4.
44. "The Mediterranean," 23.
45. "A Letter from the Pope," *Times* (London), 22 July 1943, 4.
46. Deakin, 436.
47. Argus, "Behind the Enemy Line," *Nation*, 19 December 1942, 685.
48. "King of Italy Sees Bombed Areas."
49. Botjer, 87.
50. Ibid.
51. May, 128.
52. Deakin, 423-24. This is perhaps the critical paragraph in Deakin's entire 900-page work and is very confusing and guarded. What follows is the entire paragraph, including Deakin's original citations in square brackets.
53. See original Deakin text note 53, lines 1-3.
54. Albert N. Garland, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), 266.
55. Deakin, 424.
56. Ibid., 436.
57. Ibid.
58. C. G. Pauling, "Italian Army," *The Commonweal*, 23 April 1943, 5.
60. George Kent, "The Last Days of Dictator Benito Mussolini," *Reader's Digest*, October 1944, 14.
61. Deakin, 436. Grandi claims he also called for this meeting, but he had been making that request since June, so cannot in truth make the direct claim for Mussolini's acquiescence; Dino Grandi, "Dino Grandi Explains," *Life*, 26 February 1945, 81; and "OSS Numbered Report #52,

17 August 43." This report, highly accurate in regard to Duke Acquarone role in the coup d'etat, claimed the duke also negotiated with Fascist leaders to arrange for their insistence on a Fascist Grand Council meeting.

62. Kent, 13.

63. Ibid., 425.

64. Grandi, 81, states in his self-aggrandizing account that he boldly requested the meeting. Deakin says this meeting took place at 5 p.m. on 24 July at the summons of Mussolini, who had gotten wind of the motion from loyal Scorza. Also, Deakin's date and time do not agree with events, as this is also the time the Grand Council meeting convened. Deakin, 426, and Kent, 13, which also casts Grandi in a heroic cast, states that Grandi made the request.

65. Grandi, 21.

66. Deakin, 426 and Kent, 14.

67. Garland, 268.

68. Kuchyinsky, 75.

69. Deakin, 443.

70. Kent, 15.

71. Deakin, 447. However, some accounts claim Mussolini first "plunged into the details of his meeting with Hitler," explaining that Hitler wanted all troops "to withdraw as soon as possible to the Po River, and that all Italian troops were to be placed directly under the command of the German General Staff." "Rescued' Mussolini Reappeared as Nazis' Newest Puppet Ruler," *Newsweek*, 27 September 1943, 138. However, this account does not agree with Deakin, Grandi, or Kent, and certainly not with subsequent German strategy. Moreover, it also claims that Mussolini "indicated that he had turned down these proposals because no Italian government could survive the docile surrender of most of the peninsula." This does not sound credible as Deakin and Kent do not support it, nor do other statements by Badoglio who said that the Fuhrer talked "three hours without taking a breath" and "Mussolini didn't say anything." "King's Cousin," *Newsweek*, 15 November 1943, 29.

72. Frederick Painton, "How Mussolini Fell," *Harper's Magazine*, January 1945, 138. Was Stalingrad something to be proud of? I think not. Botjer, 29. He records the losses at Pantelleria at 200 dead, 200 wounded, and 4,600 prisoners.

73. Ibid.

74. Painton, 139.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Kent, 14.

78. Ibid.

79. Dino Grandi, 26 February 1945, 83.

80. Deakin, 447.

81. Kent, 15.

82. Deakin, 447.

83. Ibid.

84. Kent, 16.

85. Painton, 140.

86. Ibid., 141. Mussolini's sixtieth unhappy birthday was in three days (he was born on 29 July 1883), so he was not quite sixty yet.

87. Kent, 16.

88. Deakin, 453.

89. Kent, 15. According to Grandi, the council met and voted against war in December 1939. Obviously, even if this "vote" did occur, it was nonbinding. See Grandi, 22. Later on page 84, in apparent contradiction, he also states this was "the first and last vote."

90. Deakin, 453.

91. Salvenmini, 540; Grandi, 85. In his account, Grandi gives 4:00 a.m.

92. Gaetano Salvenmini, "Italian Rumoresque," *The Nation*, 29 May 1943, 777.

93. Ibid.

94. Painton, 142.

95. Deakin, 469.

96. Painton, 142.
97. Ibid.; and Deakin, 436.
98. Deakin, 344.
99. Ibid., 468.
100. Ibid., 142.
101. Painton, 143.
102. Ibid., 143.
103. Deakin, 469.
104. Ibid.; and Painton, he records 4:35 p.m., 143.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., 469–71.
107. At this point it must be noted that Mussolini's own account of these events is so much at odds with other recollections, especially the final meeting with the king, that it must almost be disregarded. Mussolini's version of this 20-minute meeting has him singing antiwar songs with the king and politely shaking hands after his dismissal. B. Mussolini, *Fall of Mussolini* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1948), 71.
108. Even in his first radio speech after his rescue, some 24 days later, his voice sounded "old and tired. It was subdued and without emphasis and it failed to employ the usual balcony flourishes." "Rescued' Mussolini Reappears as Nazis' Newest Puppet Ruler," *Newsweek*, 27 September 1943, 28. Grandi, 81, claims that Mussolini was never a broken man with so much power still in his control.
109. Grandi, 81; and Painton, 144.
110. Botjer, 37.
111. Painton, 144.
112. Ibid.
113. Kuchyinsky, 13.
114. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, eds., *Calculations* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 99–100.
115. "Duce Out, Italy Becomes Prey of Nazis as Well as Allies," *Newsweek*, 2 August 1943, 19.
116. Botjer, 37.
117. Garland, 268.
118. Kuchyinsky, 75–76.
119. "OSS Numbered Report #44, 31 July 43."
120. Botjer, 37; and "OSS Numbered Report #45, 3 August 43."
121. "OSS Numbered Report #45, 3 August 43."
122. "Italy: State of Revolution," *Time Magazine*, 9 August 1943, 24.
123. "OSS Numbered Report #46, 6 August 43."
124. "Duce Out," 19.
125. Ibid.
126. "Mussolini Resigns," *Times* (London), 26 July 1943, 4.

Chapter 6

The Denouement of Defeat

Italians, you know that on July 25 we let up our aerial bombardment. We were trying to give Italy a breathing space in which to unite for peace and freedom. But the Germans have used that breathing space to strengthen their position. . . . Italians, we cannot tolerate this and we issue to you this solemn warning. The breathing space is over. Be prepared.

—Times (London)
2 August 1943

Despite the occurrence of a long hoped for event, the ouster of Mussolini on 25 July caught the Allies by surprise.¹ According to Garland, "the conquest of Sicily and intensified aerial bombardment of the mainland, they believed, might be enough."² The surprise occurred for three reasons. First, the action in Sicily had yet to be decided. The Allies were advancing in the west, and the largest city on the island, Palermo, had fallen. Yet, stiffening German resistance along the Etna line prevented the Allies from breaking through until 6 August and held up the conquest of the Sicily.³

Second, a lack of interagency coordination resulted in the failure to exploit the collapse of the Italian government. The US Department of State had scarcely discussed the peace terms to be imposed on a vanquished Italy. On 26 July, the Allies would have found it impossible to state their peace terms—aside from unconditional surrender.⁴ Unfortunately, the Allied powers were only offering unconditional surrender to the Badoglio government. On 27 July, Cordell Hull, US secretary of state, in Washington after the Quebec Conference, told reporters that "he did not expect any change in the announced policy of exacting unconditional surrender from the Axis powers. . . . The point most frequently made [by Roosevelt and Churchill] is that Italy cannot be allowed merely to retire and 'lick her wounds'; she must as conquered territory, be made to provide bases from which the Allies can strike at Germany and at war plants in such countries as Austria and Czechoslovakia, which could be brought within reach of heavy bombers."⁵

The State Department should not take all of the blame, as disagreement on a set of armistice terms existed on the highest levels. The Americans did not want the House of Savoy involved in the reconstitution of the postwar Italian government, while the British were loath to see another European monarchy disappear.⁶ At his headquarters in Algiers, Eisenhower directed his staff on 26 July to draw up detailed plans for Avalanche (the invasion of the Italian mainland at Salerno) and also to draft a set of armistice terms should the

Italians seek a surrender. Eisenhower sent this armistice draft to the CCS in Washington, D.C. This led to a series of cables between Roosevelt and Churchill concerning armistice and surrender conditions. The two Allied leaders could not reach an agreement and Roosevelt wired Churchill at the end of July: "That in the future he preferred to let Eisenhower act to meet situations as they arise"⁷ until the two governments could draft a final surrender agreement.

Finally, after the ouster of Mussolini, Marshal Badoglio's government did little publicly to clarify the position of the Italians on continuing the war.

Much of the present Italian political situation hangs on this quality of caution in Marshal Badoglio's character. He did not organize and lead an anti-Fascist revolution. But he took charge after it occurred. . . . It was a tribute to his fundamental honesty as well as to his lack of guile in politics, a trait that may turn out to be more of an asset than anything else. Badoglio is a typical Piedmontese army man with devotion to an established order—in Badoglio's case, the house of his King. His personal loyalty to Victor Emmanuel is also a natural consequence of his wealth and position at the top of the military caste in Italy.⁸

General Eisenhower remembers in a 1949 interview that

after the overthrow of Mussolini, we were very anxious to exploit any breaks which might develop in the situation. We hoped that there would be a situation of which we could take advantage before German strength in Southern Italy was built up. At that time the Germans were not strong enough to hold Southern Italy or to oppose a landing there. Our supposition was, naturally, that when, in the midst of war, a dictatorship is overthrown, the purpose and intention of the new government is to get out of the war. We thought there would be some opportunity with the new Italian government. We did not then know Marshal Badoglio—an old man and inclined to temporize.⁹

Although the Fascist rule of 20 years had been removed, this was but one obstacle which prevented Italian withdrawal from the war. The dilemma which Mussolini confronted of German occupation versus Allied conquest also confronted the interim Badoglio government—with over one and one-half million soldiers and workers outside of Italy in German control.¹⁰ Donovan's assessment of the political situation was particularly apropos: "The government, caught between domestic peace pressure and German military pressure, appeared to be sitting on the fence and awaiting developments. . . . The Badoglio government found itself in the painful position of being unable either to continue the war effectively (so far as Italian interests are concerned), or to make peace."¹¹

On 26 July, when the world woke up to realize Mussolini was no more, Badoglio announced via Italian radio: "Italians! By order of his Majesty the King-Emperor, I assume with full powers the military government of the country. The war continues. Italy, severely tried in her invaded provinces and in her destroyed cities, maintains faith in her given word, jealous keeper of her many thousands of years of traditions."¹² Two days later, the *Times* reported, a sharper pronouncement came from the Badoglio regime on the radio in the usual Fascist spot for political summaries. "In 1943 the Italian

people have rejected Fascism because they found that it curtailed their liberty—and because the errors it allowed their leaders to make were compromising the war effort of the country.” It went on to say that there had been no moral collapse, the country was more united and, under the new Government, ‘The war goes on,’ was repeated more and more firmly throughout the day.”¹³ Furthermore, through the British embassy in Lisbon, the Allies received only unofficial private peace feelers on 21 July. If Badoglio wanted to surrender, initially he was not making this aim publicly or privately known to the Allies.

Finally, Badoglio appeared to be playing both sides of the fence, trying to treat with the Germans and the Allies, while taking into account the suffering of the people. Badoglio instructed General Marras on 29 July to personally take a telegram to Hitler. According to Marras, the instructions were “simply to request a conference.”¹⁴ In Marras’s mind, however, “the idea of a common peace by Italy and Germany was not excluded although [he] did not know of such a proposal by Badoglio.”¹⁵ In the end, Hitler said he would consider the proposal, but if the conference took place, the Crown Prince Humbert should also attend. The meeting between Badoglio and Hitler never took place.¹⁶ Badoglio had also seen the destruction of the first Rome raid and the Romans’ anguish caused by the air attack.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Italy still made moves to extract itself from the Pact of Steel. Before the end of July, Badoglio ordered the withdrawal of 22 divisions from garrison duty in the Balkans, Greece, and France.¹⁸

Thus, this lack of coordination and agreement on the part of the Allies, combined with the warlike messages and activities coming from the Badoglio government, put the ball squarely in the court of the supreme commander of Allied forces in theater. With his ground and naval forces tied up in the stalled offensive in Sicily, Eisenhower looked to airpower to compel the Italians to make some move toward withdrawal from the war.

A Second Rome Raid

Asked whether he was satisfied that the apologies for bombing Rome served any useful purpose, Mr. Churchill replied that the Government had not made any apology for bombing the marshaling yards near the city. On the contrary, if they were repaired, and hostile military traffic were resumed, they would have to be bombed again. His reply to another question was that all his information as to the political, military, and social consequences of the raid was encouraging.

—Churchill, during Prime Minister’s Question Time

After the collapse of the Fascist government, Eisenhower suspended the heavy air raids on Italian cities to give the Italians a chance to make peace overtures, as well as to give his aircrews, who had been operating at full capacity for over seven weeks, a chance to rest and prepare for the Ploesti raid.¹⁹ After discussion with Tedder on 1 August, Eisenhower decided to resume bombing, particularly in the Naples area, northern Italy, and on the

marshaling yards around Rome.²⁰ This decision reflected some opinions in the American press which called for more bombing. "If the king does not yield, the 'people' will be bombed until the king is threatened with 'chaos and anarchy.' As soon as the king has yielded, 'chaos and anarchy' must come to an end and the 'mob' must be put down."²¹

In conjunction with an ongoing psychological campaign aimed at the Italian people and Badoglio government and informing them of the dire consequences if they did not surrender, the Allied bombing began anew. During the night of 31 July and 1 August, RAF Wellingtons dropped leaflets on Rome and Naples.²² US Flying Fortresses then bombed Naples twice in daylight raids, while Wellingtons sortied over the hapless city three times at night during the first week of August.²³ As in the Naples raid and Rome raid of 17 July and 19 July, the NAAF staff planned the 1 August raid to precede the second Rome raid planned for 3 August. In total, Naples received 170 sorties over three bombing raids, with no reported aircraft losses.²⁴

Cities in northern Italy felt the shock of less discriminate night bombing when Bomber Command accelerated its morale bombing campaign. Two hundred Lancasters visited Milan, Genoa, and Turin on 7 August.²⁵ British heavy bombers struck a second time on 12 August with more than 500 RAF bombers, while another force of 150 bombers attacked Turin.²⁶ On the night of 15–16 August, a third British raid on Milan consisting of 200 bombers delivered 550 tons and "destroyed or badly damaged 40 churches, 99 schools and 3200 houses; the wall bearing Leonardo's fresco of the *Last Supper* was the only part of the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie to survive. The fires in Milan raged for two days."²⁷

Spaatz's staff planned a second Rome raid on the marshaling yards for 3 August; however, it was canceled in part due to poor weather, but mostly due to CCS questions about conditions required to make Rome an open city. Churchill stalled any open city agreement. Fearing that this would be the first Italian step in making all of Italy neutral, and so allowing Italy to withdraw painlessly from the war, Churchill insisted that the city's communication and airfield systems be destroyed as a requirement for any advance up the Italian mainland.²⁸ In truth, article 24, paragraph 2, of the Hague air warfare rules, produced in 1923, provided just the caveat Churchill needed. "(2) Such bombardment [see Article 22] is legitimate only when directed exclusively at the following objectives: military forces; military works; military establishments or depots; factories constituting important and well known centers engaged in the manufacture of arms, ammunition, or distinctively military supplies; *lines of communication or transportation used for military purposes* [author's emphasis],"²⁹ and as the *Times* reported from the Quebec Conference, "according to the published view, even the existence of railways, telegraphs, or bridges—quite apart from military supplies—makes a town 'defended'; and their War Book declares Article 25 to be 'superfluous, since modern military history knows of hardly any such case'—that is, of a truly undefended town as defined by them."³⁰ "The blow at [invading] the Italian mainland, originally conceived

as a means of surrender, was to become contingent on first eliminating Italy from the war as the result of military diplomacy."³¹ The instrument of this military diplomacy was airpower, nominally targeted against transportation systems and airfields used by both Germans and Italians; but in reality against important large cities, specifically Rome. As long as the San Lorenzo marshaling yards existed, and the Allies desired to bomb it, Rome might never be an open city.

While open city discussions continued, a second Rome raid finally occurred on 13 August. In total, "106 B-17s, 102 B-26s, and 66 B-25s killed an estimated 500 people . . . the fires ignited in Rome on 13 August were not finally put out until 20 August."³² The planes dropped approximately 500 tons of bombs, heavily damaging the Littorio and Lorenzo marshaling yards, rolling stock, and installations, as well as the airdrome at Littorio.³³ Now, with fighters based in Sicily, 45 P-38s escorted the B-17s, and 90 P-38s escorted the medium bombers—all from the Twelfth Air Force. In spite of an interception by 75 enemy aircraft, the raid only lost two B-26s. Allied airmen estimated enemy losses at five planes destroyed and five probables.³⁴

Spaatz sent an official letter to Arnold dated 4 September about an interesting Badoglio message. In this letter, Spaatz related Badoglio's top two of the three reasons for the surrender, "of the three major reasons for the capitulation of Italy's armed forces, he gave as one the havoc caused by air bombing, and as the second, the destruction by air of the rail targets."³⁵ Significantly, Badoglio puts the havoc caused by bombing, before the actual damage caused by the intended rail interdiction efforts. This havoc would continue as the month of August wore on, thus applying increasing moral and psychological effects on the interim Italian government.

In short, the continuation of Allied bombing had the desired effect on the Italians. These raids demonstrated that Allied bombers could inflict a significant level of punishment with minimal losses—only 2 B-26s in the south, and 15 British bombers in the north. The raids reminded the Italians not only of their own defenselessness to air attack but also of Allied intransigence and willingness to risk the destruction of priceless cultural sites in the pursuit of Italian surrender.³⁶ Psychologically, the delay of the second Rome raid may have magnified its effects, as the accelerating punishment inflicted by Bomber Command on the northern cities became widely known in the south. According to Sefani, the official Italian news agency, the second Rome raid also expedited negotiations to make Rome an open city.³⁷

Rome as an Open City

The Italian Government will do all that is necessary under international law for Rome to be considered an open city for effective purposes. . . . Enemy propaganda is, however, putting out claims utterly incompatible with international law. They demand unconditional surrender, without the faintest indication of the lot in store for

*Italians . . . Meanwhile they continue their purely terroristic attacks on Italian cities.
Each attack leads to a great reinforcement of Communism.*

—Rome radio
14 August 1943

The goal of making Rome an open city began with a request from the Holy See to the Badoglio government on 28 July.³⁸ Since the removal of Il Duce, Vatican radio continued “to impress upon the Italian people the necessity for submission to civil authorities.”³⁹ Further, Rome bombings threatened this advocacy by fomenting unrest among the people. After the second Rome raid, the pope had gone out to survey the damage and meet with the people. In the bombed areas, he went about and administered last rites to the dead. Soon a crowd of people gathered in Saint Peter’s Square. “In the Piazza di Villa Fiorella he began a sermon on the futility of war, but had to break off because of the wild shouting and chants of *Pace, Pace*.”⁴⁰ The cries of the crowd moved the pope to intercede on behalf of the Roman people. Pope Pius XII knew that Badoglio must declare Rome an open city as soon as possible.

On 31 July, the Vatican received a written response from the Badoglio government claiming that the government had decided to declare Rome an open city.⁴¹ From the Vatican point of view, this had as much to do with preserving the Catholic treasures in this capital city and clerical power in Italy—“the Church doubtless fear[ed] the liberal, democratic, and anti-clerical elements among Badoglio’s enemies”—as well as prevent civil unrest.⁴² From the Badoglio government’s point of view, it had everything to do with getting the Germans garrisoning Rome to leave.

Using the offices of the papal city, on 3 August the Badoglio government finally began a direct dialogue with the Allies through the Vatican delegation concerning the conditions under which the Allies would consider Rome to be an open city.⁴³ As a result of the aforementioned deliberations, Sumner Wells told the apostolic delegate on 5 August, that “I am instructed by the President to state that, in accordance with the accepted principles of international law and of pertinent international agreements, there is nothing to prevent the Italian Government from undertaking unilaterally to declare Rome an open city.”⁴⁴ It was, as Garland points out, “the first diplomatic move made by Italy toward the Allies, tentative and tangential as it was, thus received an ad hoc reception that was rather cold.”⁴⁵ The next message on the subject was the second Rome raid. As a negotiating tactic, it made the Allied position extremely clear to the Italians, both on the status of Rome and the status of Italy as a whole.

Without further communication from the Allies, the Italian government on 14 August formally and unilaterally declared Rome an open city. “At first the combined chiefs of staff instructed Eisenhower to make no further air attacks against the Italian capital until its status could be clarified. But on the following day, 15 August, the combined chiefs of staff decided that the Allies should not commit themselves on the matter and they thereby left

Eisenhower free to bomb such military objectives in the Rome area as he judged necessary."⁴⁶

Unfortunately, Badoglio needed much more. If his government were to survive a surrender to the Allies, he needed to save Rome from the brutal German occupation plans. Perhaps more importantly, Badoglio needed to save the only government seriously willing to surrender to the Allies. The German plan "Alaric" intended to destroy the Badoglio government before it had a chance to surrender to the Allies. As early as the evening of the 25th, Hitler had ordered the third armored division to drive south into Rome and seven others were to enter Italy.⁴⁷ Badoglio supporters, reporting to the OSS from Bern, confirmed this number at seven or eight divisions poised to enter Italy with more 20 divisions and 1,000 planes available from France if necessary.⁴⁸ As Deakin put it, "The immediate German intention was clear. By a lightning counter-coup d'état, Hitler hoped to restore a Fascist government in Rome, and at the same time to ensure complete control of Northern Italy in event of a betrayal by Badoglio."⁴⁹

During this period, the Axis military staffs met twice at very strained conferences. At Tarvisio on 6 August, the Germans arriving in armored cars and using armed guards created a particularly tense atmosphere. OSS sources claim that Joachim von Ribbentrop began the meeting in an abusive tone to Dr. Raffaele Guariglia "stating that the Germans would insist upon Italy's fulfilling Mussolini's commitments."⁵⁰ General Marras remembers, "there was no meeting of the minds but only fencing. We Italians wished to draw in our troops from France, from Croatia and to replace those in Greece. The Germans refused to permit such changes."⁵¹

The final conference between the troubled Axis partners occurred near Bologna on 15 August. Attendees Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, Gen Alfred Jodl, Roatta, and Francesco Rossi, conducted only military business. The atmosphere was tense as the Germans continued to pour reinforcements into northern Italy. General Marras's last reports urged his government to surrender quickly to the allies.⁵² Victor Emmanuel even went so far as to send two Italian divisions north to confront the flood of Germans pouring through the Brenner Pass.⁵³

Rome as an open city and all this military posturing did not prevent German occupation of northern Italy, but the unilateral declaration of Rome as an open city did accomplish three aims. First, although not preventing further air attack, it perhaps inoculated the city long enough for the surrender events to unfold. Second, as a result of the open city declaration, the Germans had to fight Italian forces guarding the outskirts of Rome in order to reoccupy the capital when news of the Italian capitulation reached them on 9 September.⁵⁴ Finally, this delay allowed the Badoglio government and the royal family to escape south to the Allies.⁵⁵ From there he made a radio address urging the "Italians to oppose the Nazis and wage a 'terrible guerrilla warfare.'"⁵⁶ Thus, when Mussolini was set up in a Fascist puppet regime in German-occupied northern Italy, there was still a legitimate government useful to the advancing Allies from the south. In irony, after all

this, the Germans announced on 10 September that they would still honor the open city status of Rome.⁵⁷

Peace Overtures

While events unfolded in Rome and northern Italy, the Badoglio government made the initial moves towards peace. The first indication of his intention to seek peace, despite the warlike pronouncements on Italian radio, was the appointment of the new foreign minister, Dr. Guariglia. A career diplomat and current ambassador to Turkey, he had a reputation as a skilled negotiator. In recent months, he had not kept secret his opinion that Italy was headed for certain defeat and his belief that Italy could not expect much help from the overburdened Germany. Dr. Guariglia seemed to be the ideal man to start negotiations with the Allies.⁵⁸

In truth, the Italians had officially and unofficially been negotiating for peace since November 1942. William S. Linsenmeyer, in "Italian Peace Feelers before the Fall of Mussolini," documents the "long and time-consuming string" of Italian offers extended to the Allies before the fall of Mussolini. Amazingly, two offers were made with the full knowledge of the Italian Fascist government, and according to the OSS, the German government as well.⁵⁹ These include an offer made by Count Ciano, the foreign minister and the Duce's son-in-law, in November 1942 to British officials in Lisbon; an offer made by Bastianini, Mussolini's undersecretary of foreign affairs, on 17 July 1943 through Cardinal Maglione, the Vatican secretary of state.⁶⁰ This latter attempt, due to meetings with representatives from Romania and Hungary seeking a separate peace "allowed Italy to speak also in the name of Hungary and Roumania."⁶¹ Interestingly, the OSS reported on this meeting between the Hungarian premier and Mussolini and stated that the premier primarily came to see the pope.⁶² The British did not respond to these conditional offers made by the Italians.

Duke Amadeo of Aosta, the king's cousin, and Princess Maria Jose, made two royal approaches without Fascist knowledge. Again, the OSS also knew of these approaches, and Donovan passed information of the desire for an "honorable surrender" on to Roosevelt.⁶³ Both overtures also met with British rebuff because they did not trust the House of Savoy. "The British reply was invariably: 'You do something first, and then we shall see.'"⁶⁴ According to one British historian, "Britain very much doubted the ability or willingness of any member of the House of Savoy to lead a revolt against fascism. [King] Victor Emmanuel was viewed as a willing tool of fascism. . . . British policy therefore should be to tell Italy that it must pay the penalty for becoming an ally of Germany and to keep up heavy indiscriminate raids on Italian cities. The raids would result in an internal collapse which would require Germany to assume control of Italy and its Balkan obligations."⁶⁵ Since the British had every reason to believe Italy would collapse completely due to aerial bombardment, they had no reason to accept anything other than

unconditional surrender. What is important from this whole tale of peace overtures prior to the fall of Mussolini is that it demonstrated the vulnerability of the Italian regime from November 1942 onwards. What either Italian regime needed was something to shock it into quitting.

After the ouster of Il Duce, the interim government immediately desired to surrender to the Allies. According to Badoglio, in an audience with the king on 28 July, representatives from his government were to overtly approach the Allies with the intention of seeking conditional terms of surrender. They made a first step toward the British ministry in the Vatican on the night of 30 July and sent D'Ajeta, Ciano's former private secretary, to Lisbon on 2 August. Another Italian diplomat in Tangier contacted a British diplomat on 5 August.⁶⁶ The Allies, said British brigadier Kenneth Strong, "did not regard these earlier approaches as of much significance" as the Lisbon discussions.⁶⁷

The first Badoglio government soundings of the Allies in Lisbon by D'Ajeta occurred on 4 August.⁶⁸ They showed, however, that the British and Americans would only treat on the basis of unconditional surrender. Furthermore, they would trust only military representatives. As in the earlier sanctioned and unsanctioned Fascist attempts, the Allies wanted nothing less than the total defeat of Italy. The Italians had one choice if they wanted out of the war. Ambrosio and Guariglia sent Gen Giuseppe Castellano to seek Allied terms on 12 August, "though he was not informed of the previous diplomatic feelers."⁶⁹

General Castellano first met with Gen Walter Bedell Smith in Lisbon, where each made a favorable impression on the other.⁷⁰ He also dealt with the British. "To Sir Samuel and Sir Ronald, General Castellano tendered a message from Marshal Badoglio: 'When the Allies land in Italy, the Italian Government is prepared to join them against Germany.'"⁷¹ The Allies considered this a serious offer and soon provided draft armistice terms.⁷² Yet this was only another conditional peace feeler, albeit this time by a senior officer, to get the Allies to put a proposal on the table. During the course of their discussions, the second Rome raid occurred and this changed the mood of the Badoglio government considerably.

General Castellano then returned on a devious route to Rome for further instructions, and was sent to meet with General Smith and other members of Eisenhower's staff in Sicily. At Palermo on 29 August, American anti-aircraft gunners received startling orders to not fire upon a Savoia-Marchetti bomber headed for the airport. Castellano disembarked with his aide to continue negotiations for an armistice. The next day the plane took off again, this time escorted by three P-38s, and returned again on the 31st.⁷³

At the Allied headquarters, General Eisenhower understood Badoglio's dilemma and best intentions. "The hesitations and doubts in the period of September came from the confusion and uncertainty in Badoglio's mind. I believe that he honestly wished to do the best thing for the interests of his country, but he was not sure what that was. When he finally did make up his mind and become convinced, he did adhere to the course."⁷⁴

The sticking point was that Badoglio wanted no announcement of the armistice until some time after the main Allied invasion.⁷⁵ Eisenhower felt that Badoglio through Castellano needed to be pushed as Badoglio was old and took too long making up his mind.⁷⁶ "General Eisenhower replied with a 24 hour ultimatum: the Allies must fix the timing of the announcement, or Italy would suffer the full shock of Allied airpower."⁷⁷

The marshal bowed to Eisenhower's coercive ultimatum, but soon the representatives of the Allies learned that Castellano again did come with the authority to sign a negotiated armistice. In a final bit of subterfuge, Gen Harold L. Alexander made a little performance which convinced Castellano that Badoglio had authorized him to surrender unconditionally to the Allies.⁷⁸ The armistice was thus signed on 3 September, and publicly announced on 9 September to coincide with *Avalanche*—which was ironically the invasion that was supposed to knock Italy out of the war. Instead, the Italians needed *Avalanche* to save Italy from the Germans.⁷⁹

Linsenmeyer best sums up what should have been more fortunate events after the first Rome raid. "As the Germans meantime acted quickly to occupy most of Italy after the coup d'état, Badoglio paradoxically moved at a glacial pace in his string of efforts to change sides in the war. In moving so slowly, he unintentionally squandered Italy's dwindling human and material resources that could have contributed substantially to the Allied war effort."⁸⁰

Salvemini, Harvard lecturer on Italian history and avid antimonarchist, accused the king and Badoglio of playing a poor game of double cross and betrayal, followed by the cowardly act of desertion in their flight south.⁸¹ This is too harsh a charge given the dilemma which faced the Italians, as he also points out that when Rome radio announced the armistice the Germans shelled, bombed, and then briefly occupied Rome.⁸² Furthermore, any failure to properly exploit Mussolini's fall and subsequent events also falls on the Allies.

The collapse of Italy created a new strategic picture for both the Germans and the Allies. For the Germans, it was one they had feared; for the Allies, it was not the one they had hoped. Italy, as foreshadowed by the German defense on the Etna line in Sicily, turned out to be very defensible. In a 1948 interview, Col E. B. Howard, G-2, Fifth Army, stated that despite the level of air superiority "the air never succeeded in [the] Italian Campaign in isolating the battlefield. The air helped us a lot, it interfered with German flow of supplies to the front, but it never shut it off or made it impossible for the Germans to stand on any line they chose. The air kept their heads down, hurt German morale some but it never was a critical factor in the German campaign in Italy."⁸³ In support of Colonel Howard's view, in a 1972 study of Operation Strangle, RAND researchers determined that aerial interdiction never reduced German supplies to a critical level. The German defenders had proven both tenacious in moving supplies by alternate means, and Allied ground operations were never sufficient to escalate consumption beyond resupply.⁸⁴

Despite Allied air supremacy, naval supremacy, and numerically superior ground power, the Germans used the defensive geography of the Italian peninsula to bog down the Allies for another two years.

Notes

1. "A Reminder to Italy," *Times* (London), 2 August 1943, 4.
2. Albert N. Garland, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), 269.
3. *Ibid.*, 362.
4. *Ibid.*, 269.
5. "Allies Demands Unchanged," *Times* (London), 27 July 1943, 4.
6. Garland, 269.
7. *Ibid.*, 277.
8. "King's Cousin," *Newsweek*, 15 November 1943, 29.
9. "Interview with General Dwight D. Eisenhower," Room 3D678, Pentagon, 16 February 1949, Office of the Chief of Military History Collection, WWII Supreme Command, Eisenhower folder, US Army Military History Institute, 1.
10. Gaetano Salvemini, "Two Wars against Italy," *New Republic*, 16 August 1943, 216; and "Italy: Temporizing," *Time Magazine*, no. 16, 1943, 24. "400,000 Italian workers in Germany, some 25 Italian divisions hemmed by the *Wehrmacht* in the Balkans."
11. William J. Donovan, *The William J. Donovan Papers* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Army Military History, n.d), 3 and 8.
12. "Badoglio Declaration," *Times* (London), 26 July 1943, 4. Badoglio earned a lot of bad feelings amongst the Allies for this proclamation, yet at the same time the Office of War Information rushed to say the "overthrow of Mussolini 'changes nothing,' that 'while the news of Mussolini's resignation is welcome to Americans, it is not regarded here as an event of great importance.'" "Here was a misreading of history in the grand manner." "History Unrecognized," *The Nation*, 7 August 1943, 144.
13. "A Sharper Note in Rome," *Times* (London), 28 July 1943, 4.
14. Howard Smyth, "Interview with General Efasio Marras," 21 December 1948, the Pentagon, Office of the Chief of Military History Collection, WWII Supreme Command, miscellaneous folder, US Army Military History Institute, 1.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. Pietro Badoglio, *Italy in the Second World War*, trans. by Muriel Currey (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 38.
18. "Strategy: After Mussolini, What?" *Time Magazine*, 2 August 1943, 30.
19. "Mr. Churchill on Rome Raid," *Times* (London), 29 July 1943, 4. Citation: Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2, *Europe: Torch to Pointblank*, 425. Air Operations in support of Husky began with the reduction of Pantelleria on 1 June.
20. Garland, 278.
21. Salvemini, "Two Wars against Italy," 218.
22. Kit C. Carter and Robert Mueller, *Combat Chronology, 1941-1945* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1991), 162. In perspective, this was also the date (1 August) of the ill-fated daylight raid on Ploesti, where 177 B-24s attack the refineries at Ploesti and nearby Campina. The operation (Tidalwave) was costly, 54 planes and 532 airman were lost. At 30.5 percent attrition, lost mostly to antiaircraft fire, this costly raid was not a sustainable demonstration of US bombing doctrine.
23. Garland, 278.
24. *Chronology of World War II* (Maxwell Field, Ala.: Air War College, 1947), 48.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, 49.
27. Stephen Harvey, "The Italian War Effort and the Strategic Bombing of Italy," *History* 70, 41 and Sally Zuckerman, *From Apes to Warlords* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 405. According to Zuckerman's report on the Hull and Birmingham survey, published April 1942 to

report on morale bombing's effect on civilian morale, "The factor most affecting the population is the destruction of houses . . . 35 people are bombed out for every one killed. . . . Dwelling houses are destroyed by high explosive and not by fire." The second Rome raid bears this statistic out. Zuckerman, 405.

28. Garland, 279.
29. AFP 110-31, *International Law—The Conduct of Armed Conflict and Air Operations* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 19 November 1976), 5-3.
30. "Rome as an Open City," *Times* (London), 19 August 1943, 5.
31. Garland, 278.
32. *Ibid.*, 41.
33. Craven and Cate, 474.
34. *Ibid.*
35. "Official letter from Spaatz to Arnold," Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 4 September 1943.
36. F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 513.
37. "Rome as an Open City," 5.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Donovan, 9.
40. George F. Botjer, *Sideshow War: The Italian Campaign 1943-1945* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M, 1996), 87.
41. "Rome as an Open City," 5; and Garland, 278.
42. Donovan, 9.
43. Garland, 278.
44. *Ibid.*, 279.
45. *Ibid.*, 280.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Deakin, 492-500.
48. "OSS Numbered Report #52, 17 August 43," *Roosevelt Map Room Military Subject Files* (Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1991).
49. *Ibid.*, 499.
50. "OSS Numbered Report #52, 17 August 43."
51. Smyth, 3.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Botjer, 42-43.
54. "OSS Numbered Report #52, 17 August 43." This was a little gift from Badoglio and Ambrosio to Kesselring. Deakin, 499-500, 503-30. General Marras was in Berlin at the time, "but considers that the plan to defend Rome was a mistake. The air fields [sic] were in German hands. The Italian Army should have acted as a whole." "Interview with General Efsio Marras," 21 December 1948 in room 200B, Shoreham Hotel, Office of the Chief of Military History Collection, WWII Supreme Command, miscellaneous folder, US Army Military History Institute, 1.
55. Deakin, 530.
56. "'Rescued' Mussolini Reappears as Nazis' Newest Puppet Ruler," *Newsweek*, 27 September 1943, 32.
57. *Ibid.*
58. "The New Cabinet," *Times* (London), 27 July 1943, 4.
59. "OSS Numbered Report #1, 10 March 43." Significance of the Ribbentrop-Mussolini Meeting 24-28 February in Rome. "He [Ribbentrop] agreed to allow Mussolini to contact the Anglo-Saxons, and the basis for a peace offer was discussed" which consisted of three points: 1) To remove the fear that the Axis wanted to dominate other European states, 2) That Axis nations assured liberty to all European states, and 3) That the real danger is Bolshevism.
60. Interestingly, General Marras did not believe Mussolini made any peace offers to the Allies. "Mussolini knew that his own life and fortune was completely bound up with Fascism. He feared that unconditional surrender meant that he himself would be delivered to the English, as a war criminal." Howard Smyth, "Interview with General Efsio Marras," 3.

61. William S. Linsenmeyer, "Italian Peace Feelers before the Fall of Mussolini," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1981, 650-52.
62. "OSS Numbered Report #16, 16 April 43."
63. "OSS Numbered Report #36, 24 Jun 43."
64. Linsenmeyer, 654.
65. Ibid.
66. Deakin, 502.
67. Howard Smyth, interview with Brig Kenneth William D. Strong, Pentagon, 29 October 1947, Office of the Chief of Military History Collection, WWII Supreme Command, miscellaneous folder, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: US Army Military History Institute, 1.
68. "How the Armistice Was Made," *Times* (London), 13 September 1943, generally agrees with this date.
69. Deakin, 511.
70. Howard Smyth, "Interview with General Walter Bedell Smith," 13 May 1947, State Department Building, Office of the Chief of Military History Collection, WWII Supreme Command, miscellaneous folder, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: US Army Military History Institute.
71. "Italy: Parleys, Part II," *Time Magazine*, 20 September 1943, 23.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., 6.
75. Ibid.
76. "Eisenhower interview," 1.
77. Ibid.
78. Sidney Matthews, "Interview with Harold Alexander," *Sidney Mathews Collection*, OCMH, WWII Mediterranean, 1942-45 (folder) Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: US Army Military History Institute.
79. "Italy Surrenders," *Times* (London), 9 September 1943, 4.
80. Linsenmeyer, 658.
81. Gaetano Salvemini, "Italy against the Monarchy," *The Nation*, 1 June 1946, 655.
82. Gaetano Salvemini, "Two Wars against Italy," *New Republic*, 16 August 1943, 216 and 218; Professor Salvemini understood the effect of airpower on Italy and though they compounded the Allied worries about sources of Italian instability, "with all due respect to Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt, I dare to think that when American and British airmen bomb Italian cities, they create chaos and anarchy there. Would a communist or anarchist revolution of even the most extreme violence shatter the cities of Palermo, Messina, Catania, Naples, Leghorn, Milan, Turin and Rome more completely than the American and British air forces?"
83. Sidney Matthews, "Interview with Col E. B. Howard (former brigadier general)" at the National War College on 5 March 1948, 1430 to 1630 hours, *Sidney Mathews Collection*, OCMH., WWII Mediterranean (folder), 1.
84. F. M. Sallager, "Operation 'STRANGLE' (Italy, Spring 1944): A Case Study of Tactical Air Interdiction" (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1972).

Chapter 7

No Crowing for a New Dawn

For the first time in history, a fortified position of that strength surrendered directly to an air force. But the air attack on Pantelleria was conducted under virtually ideal laboratory conditions. The island is only 32 [sic] miles square; the blockade by the Royal Navy was complete; fighter protection for our bombers was continuous against negligible air opposition. Moreover, on landing we discovered that another kind of garrison could have continued to fight. Its casualties were surprising light. Undamaged aircraft reposed in underground hangers that were almost intact. There was still water and food on the island. The will to fight, however, had been destroyed.

—Gen Henry “Hap” Arnold
first report to the secretary of war

On 4 January 1944, the commanding general of the Army Air Forces, General Arnold, briefed the secretary of war on the contribution of airpower to the Allied war effort.¹ He addressed the precision and effectiveness of bombing in North Africa. He then touted the effects of aerial bombardment on Pantelleria. General Arnold also claimed that “the Army Air Force did much to save the day at Salerno.”² However, he made no mention of the Rome raids, the ouster of Mussolini, or the Italian surrender. Although time and space limitations may have prevented the mention of these significant events, it is more likely Arnold wanted to emphasize that the best strategy to defeat Germany was bombing industries, “to destroy the will to fight is one of the secondary objectives of our air offensive against Germany, we do not expect white crosses to appear tomorrow on the runways at Templehof [as in Pantelleria]. Our *primary* concern, simply stated, is to make the coming invasion of Germany as economic as possible by drastically reducing the war potential of the Third Reich and its satellites.”³

In a letter to Spaatz, 7 July 1943, Arnold listed his priorities for garnering both public and official support of air operations and which reports from the front should be included to obtain this support. These priorities were first, destroying the enemy’s airpower, second, “still more, it is important for the people to understand that our prime purpose is destruction of the enemy’s ability to wage war, by our planned persistent bombing and sapping of this vital industries, his transportation, and his whole supply system,” and third, the understanding that air operations take time and money.⁴ In this detailed correspondence, which includes nothing about the morale effects of bombing, he includes a “dummy [report] and explanation of what is believed to be a good type of report.”⁵ Certainly the effects of the first Rome raid, 12 days after

Arnold posted this letter in priority airmail, did not fit into Arnold's version of a proper "dummy report" from the front.

In defense of Arnold, he knew the war on Italian soil was not over, thanks to German tenacity, and that the Allies must still defeat Germany itself. Like Spaatz he may have believed that any emphasis on Italy might endanger the Air Corps strategy of industrial warfare against Germany. The bombing strategy was in jeopardy once again in early 1944 as a result of disastrous raids on Ploesti (August 1943) and Schweinfurt (August and October 1943).⁶ Still, in a letter to Spaatz dated 20 August, Arnold wrote, "It would be trite of me to congratulate you upon the fine performance of your Command in the Battle of Sicily and its collateral activities in Southern Italy."⁷ In the continuing debate over the best use of strategic airpower, Spaatz was ironically winning the war Arnold wanted to lose; conversely, Eaker was losing the war Arnold wanted to win.

General Eaker also congratulated Spaatz in a personal letter dated 11 September 1943. "Congratulations from all of us on your great successes in Italy. We have watched with the keenest interest your day-to-day communiqués and the progress of this phase of the campaign."⁸ However, Arnold soon transferred Eaker out of the limelight from the Eighth Air Force to command the reorganized Mediterranean Army Air Forces (MAAF).⁹ Yet, it was Spaatz who wrote in a letter to the assistant secretary of war that after the Rome raids, "I am becoming increasingly convinced that Germany can be forced to her knees by aerial bombardment alone."¹⁰

Spaatz's observation displayed a bit of naiveté as Germany was a different case altogether. According to "Bomber" Harris, morale bombing was "comparatively ineffective against so well organized a police state as Germany" as "the civil population remained apathetic, while the Gestapo saw to it that they were docile, and, in so far as there was work left for them to do, industrious."¹¹ Furthermore, he concludes that the object of bombing German industrial cities to break enemy morale proved to be wholly unsound. "A scheme for the precision bombing of key factories had been worked out before the war. As an abstract theory, in the void, it had its points; Germany had built up what seemed to be a highly artificial economy, using factories to produce raw materials synthetically at a vast cost in labour in order to be self-sufficient."¹² The theory did not take into account Germany overrunning Europe, excess industrial capacity and dispersion of production, substitution and redundancy of goods and capacity, tenacious and effective German air defenses, and the ability to recover from even the worst bomb damage until ground forces finally occupied all of Germany. In contrast, the USSBS concluded that "even a first-class military power—rugged and resilient as Germany was—cannot live long under full-scale and free exploitation of air weapons over the heart of its territory."¹³ Irrespective of this debate on the German case, the conditions of southern European countries resembled Italy.

In southern Europe, Eaker developed a broader view of the use of airpower. Eaker went to the MAAF with the full intent of continuing the air campaign against Germany from the south, but later he saw other uses of his strategic

bombers.¹⁴ His heavy bombers leveled the Cassino monastery on 15 February 1944 and then the town itself on 15 March.¹⁵ By late 1944, Eaker and the CCS were authorizing MAAF bombers to strike the capitals of Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania to cause a morale collapse similar to Italy, selecting Sophia as the best target. "If secondary effects on morale could be obtained from precision attacks, as in Rome, and if bombing Bulgarian marshaling yards could influence the government to leave the war, then so much the better."¹⁶ These countries did surrender and then the Soviet Army quickly overran them. Despite Eaker's repeated requests, the Soviets had little interest in helping with MAAF bomb damage assessment.¹⁷ So morale bombing effectiveness, under conditions different from the German police state, remains largely unexplored.

The debate on the best use of airpower continues today. This debate should not center over the most effective mechanism of airpower, but under what conditions airpower can best produce the effects that contribute to victory.

The Contribution of Airpower

In the end, students of airpower will serve the country well by putting the Gulf War in a larger context, one in which the gloomy wisdom of Sherman tempers the brisk enthusiasm of those who see airpower as a shining sword, effortlessly wielded, that can create and preserve a just and peaceful world order.

—Eliot Cohen

Too much should not be made from any one case study.¹⁸ However, in summing up, from the historical record, this study suggests that strategic airpower made four contributions to the collapse of Italy in 1943 and the first victory over an Axis power.

A Policy Contribution to the Formation of Allied Grand Strategy. The case revealed an interesting example of coalition politics and strategy formulation. The original British strategy was to eliminate Italy from the war and the British artfully dragged the Americans along. The British believed the indirect approach to defeating Germany involved forcing Italy to surrender. Their position was supported by the doctrinal belief in morale bombing and the city busting advocacy, and the leadership of Churchill, the JIC reports which claimed that Italy would collapse under air attack alone or in conjunction with other operations, and finally, the actual results of "night morale bombing" on northern Italian cities. In 1943 the Americans could only offer a theoretical daylight precision bombing strategy and the direct approach of building up for a cross-channel invasion to defeat Germany. As a result of their argumentation as well as negotiating skill, over the course of 1942 and 1943, the junior coalition partner coaxed the United States through the Mediterranean. As a coalition, the Allies spent a considerable amount of resources and time in the Mediterranean to knock Italy out of the war, but

achieved their aims fairly quickly and effectively thanks to the contribution of airpower.

An Interdictive Contribution in Support of Ongoing Ground Campaigns. As part of an overall interdiction campaign to destroy lines of communication in Italy and Sicily, strategic airpower contributed to the ground and naval offensives. Airpower exhausted the target lists in Sicily in preparation and in support of the ground offensive of the island before conducting missions on the Italian mainland. Many targets on the mainland contributed not only to maintaining air superiority but also to denying resupply of southern Italy and Sicily. Because Rome and Naples had two of three critical railway nodes, these cities, as well as the railway node near Foggia, became primary targets for strategic attack in order to support Operations Husky and Avalanche. As noted by Zuckerman, this campaign against railway nodes was highly successful in destroying rail transportation capability in southern Italy.¹⁹

A Psychological Contribution to the Fall of the Fascist Government. The first Rome raid on 19 July was the ideal shattering blow to coerce the Italians. It demonstrated that the Allies were capable of and willing to devastate a cradle of Western civilization to achieve their aims. From a physical standpoint, the magnitude and success of the first Rome raid indicated both the capability of Allied airpower and the defenselessness of Italy to air attack. Psychologically, the raid had far-reaching effects. At a time of immense psychological vulnerability at Feltre, where Mussolini failed to obtain especially the much-needed fighter aircraft from his ally, he received the report of the Rome bombing. After Feltre and the Rome raid, Mussolini no longer controlled his government or events. Beyond this "psychological decapitation" of Italy's dictator, the Rome bombing convinced other political centers of power—namely the king, the pope, Fascist leaders, and the governed population they represented—that Mussolini must go in order for Italy to get out of the war. The Italians needed *prima facie* proof of their vulnerability and defeat.

A Psychological Contribution to the Surrender by the Badoglio Government. Finally, the second Rome raid on 13 August simultaneously applied coercive pressure as well as relief to the interim Badoglio government. The people of Italy celebrated when Mussolini fell because they thought the war was virtually over. When the new Badoglio government did not surrender, the second Rome raid coercively reminded it of the consequences. Furthermore, when Badoglio's representatives sought a conditional surrender, airpower applied further psychological pressure by renewing the bombing. This helped transfer stalled armistice negotiations from reluctant civilian representatives in Lisbon to willing military representatives in Sicily. Additionally, the second Rome raid enabled the Italians to declare Rome an open city, which forced the occupying Germans to vacate the capital. This relieved Badoglio of the German occupation conundrum; thereby allowing the royal family and Badoglio government to escape south to the Allies after the surrender announcement.

Altogether, strategic airpower contributed to the collapse of Italy in 1943 on both physical and psychological domains. Recently, some political scientists have suggested that airpower only contributed physically to the military defeat of Italian forces.²⁰ In fact, this case history suggests that airpower, in both its employment and threat of further employment, successfully contributed to the coercion of both Italian governments. As Mussolini told his staff at Feltre, Italy faced the dilemma of Italy becoming a battleground regardless of whether Italy fought on or surrendered to see ruthless Germans occupy the country. The psychological effects of both the first and second Rome raids on both Italian governments contributed more to their policy changes than the physical damage wrought. This was because the Rome raids and possibility of invasion convinced the Italians that the Allies had the potential to inflict much more damage than a probable German occupation. Finally, subsequent events to the surrender did not support the military defeat of the Axis coalition. Two years of German occupation of Italy demonstrated that the peninsula was defensible, despite overwhelming Allied air and ground superiority. Therefore, the Axis were not militarily defeated in Italy, but airpower psychologically drove the Italians to surrender.

The Significance of Italy

Every case is different, and the conditions and circumstances in Italy were unique.²¹ This case study suggests several significant characteristics of the Italian state that merit additional research to determine their relevance to the contribution of airpower to the collapse of Italy in 1943.

- **Does a special belief in airpower increase its psychological effectiveness?**

Was Douhet right, at least as far as the Italians were concerned? Did the Italian people believe that when the air battle was lost, the war was lost? The Fascist government subjected Italians to more than 20 years of demagoguery about airpower and the role of the independent air force via the press and government propaganda. Additionally, the Fascist government touted Douhet's teachings on city bombing and exaggerated bombing effectiveness in Spain and Africa.²² As Harvey pointed out, the Italians had minimal anti-aircraft defenses, as Douhetian theory did not prescribe them and the Italians could not afford them. So, in the ultimate form of mirror imaging, when airpower, in the form of a fleet of B-17s, appeared over their cities, just as Douhet said they would, it was time to quit. Turin was the only European city to demonstrate widespread panic. It is uncertain whether or not every nation would have this same, deep epistemological belief in the efficacy of airpower.²³

- **Does air attack on political, cultural, and religious center affect morale?**

Craven and Cate aptly note that "Rome, however, was no ordinary target. It was the 'Eternal City,' the cradle of Western civilization; it was the seat of the Pope, the center of the Catholic World."²⁴ The special nature of Rome, not only as the Italian capital but as the city best deserving an exemption from destruction of war, made the Rome raids psychologically more painful for the Italian people than physically. The bombing of Rome demonstrated the willingness of the Allies to devastate all of Italy to win the war. Whether any city or place in any country would ever have the significance of Rome is doubtful. Moreover, in the current era of casualty minimization, the convenient legality analogous to the San Lorenzo marshaling yards might not exist or suffice.

- **How does being defenseless to air attack affect morale?**

By mid-1943, Italy was physically and psychologically defenseless to attack from Allied airpower. Three years of continual combat largely had destroyed the Italian air force and no aid was forthcoming from its ally. Civil defense in the form of anti-aircraft and radar warning, as well as bomb shelters for the population was negligible.²⁵ Unlike Germany, the Allies showed they could give Italy warning of attack for humane and psychological purposes, and then bomb the target with negligible losses to the attackers. Harvey concluded that "if Italy had been better mobilized for war, she would have been better able, militarily, organizationally, perhaps even psychologically, to deal with the air raids . . . and Italian society at war was bombed out of what willingness and ability to fight it had possessed at the beginning."²⁶

- **How can airpower take advantage of polycratic governments?**

Finally, the polycratic nature of Italian political power offered uniquely serendipitous advantages for psychological exploitation. There are very few cases in history of an authoritarian political leader like Mussolini serving constitutionally at the behest of a monarch. There are very few examples of a political leader who must so closely consider the views of a leader of a major world religion, a religion that dominates his own country and which is headquartered in his nation's capital. If that were not enough, Il Duce was only a leader of a political party and reported to a 27-member Fascist Grand Council which was greatly influenced by the military leaders under desperate wartime circumstances.

These conditions make the Italian case unique. Yet these conditions are generalizable for many opponents the United States Air Force may face in the near future.

The Future of Airpower

With every successful employment of airpower, what Cohen refers to as its "mystique" grows. Desert Storm demonstrated the capability of modern airpower to decimate a sizable, albeit inferior, military power. Diplomats claimed that compelling airpower of Operation Deliberate Force was vital to

securing the Dayton Accords. Like the aforementioned conventions of naval siege, where only one shot for military honor sufficed to elicit surrender from a coastal fortress, events like those witnessed by Pantelleria could become more commonplace. Pundits of airpower would hope that the efficacious application of airpower may be its presence alone. As the reputation of airpower grows, airpower may derive persistence from a relative combination of state of mind and a state of capability, rather than a state of siege.

What made the Rome raids psychologically important was not the destruction of the bombing but the demonstrated intent to wage war on a new level and the capability to continue that destruction. The willingness to strike at anything an enemy might hold dear creates a leverage that modern practitioners of airpower should not ignore. Moreover, the intent of US technological advances in aircraft, weaponry, and defenses is to create the ability to do so with impunity. The relative industrial and military power between the United States and potential adversaries today may more resemble the relative relationship in industrial and military power of the Allies to Italy in 1943 than that of peers in national power.

Finally, the polycratic state is more the norm in the current era. In every state more than one center of political power exists. In many countries, religion plays a key role in government, as well as the military. Unlike the simple Clausewitzian paradoxical triangle of the government, the military, and the people, reality is complicated by differing forms of government, the possible role of religion in government and civic life, and differing allegiances of the people to other agendas.²⁷ Finally, in the modern era international governmental organizations and private multinational organizations and corporations are playing an increasing role in governmental activities. In short, there are many triangles of social contract between the people, governing bodies advocating policies, and their defenders. As in the collapse of Italy in 1943, each of these triangles may be exploitable by airpower.

In conclusion, the future practitioners of airpower should not ignore any mechanism for victory through airpower, especially when the applications of airpower can achieve the demonstrated multiple effects evidenced in the collapse of Italy. Beside the critical psychological pressure on Mussolini, the king, and others, airpower contributed tangible military denial effects as well. Even if decapitation, including psychological decapitation, risk, and punishment strategies have lower orders of probability of success than military denial, these lower likelihoods may be due to the fact that conditions for their success arise less often and military leaders do not properly exploit them. These alternative strategies to military denial should not be dismissed as impossible, and should be considered during planning and conducting military operations. The payoffs for the first and second Rome raids were substantial, and if properly exploited by plans that anticipated the long-forecast collapse of Italy, could have been more decisive.

Today it is too tempting to try to draw conclusive and generalized lessons from the Persian Gulf War. Journalists, historians, and airpower theorists know little of the Gulf War events from the Iraqi perspective. We do know

that Desert Storm was a stunning and lopsided military victory. Although decimating an adversary's military power clearly does achieve the military objective, other forms of air strategy might have also succeeded by differing mechanisms. Our task must always be to bleed an adversary of his political will, not drain white the veins of the common soldier. Saddam Hussein is still in power. We may not know for some time how close Saddam came to collapsing from the psychological pressures of airpower, nor what application of airpower might have been the vital straw that may have broken the camel's back.

Notes

1. H. H. Arnold, "First Report of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces to the Secretary of War" (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1944), 44.
2. Ibid., 45.
3. Ibid.
4. "Personal letter from Arnold to Spaatz," *Spaatz Collection*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 7 July 1943, 1.
5. Ibid., 2.
6. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2, *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943* (1949; new imprint, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 483, 706-16.
7. *Spaatz Collection*.
8. "Personal letter from Eaker to Spaatz," *Spaatz Collection*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 11 September 1943.
9. Ibid., 744-51.
10. "Official letter from Spaatz to Mr. Lovell," *Spaatz Collection*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 20 August 1943.
11. Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1947), 78-79.
12. Ibid., 79.
13. *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: Summary Report (European War)* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1946), 5-6.
14. This goes against Eaker's oft used quote, "We must never allow the record of this war to convict us of throwing the strategic bomber at the man of the street," which he wrote to General Spaatz in 1943. James Parton, *Air Force Spoken Here* (Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1986), 485.
15. Parton, 361-76.
16. Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 94-98; and Crane cites Ronald Schaffer, *Wings of Judgment* (New York: Oxford, 1985), 54-55.
17. Parton, 428.
18. Eliot Cohen, "The Mystique of Airpower," *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 1994, 226.
19. It should be noted that Operation Strangle, the interdiction campaign to help break the Gustav line in 1944, was particularly unsuccessful in stopping German resupply.
20. Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Airpower and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 344.
21. Ernest R. May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), 134, describes the destruction caused by the impending invasion, the possibility that Mussolini's poor health might lead to a succession, and the unique political circumstances. "Conditions in Italy in 1943 may have been unique. . . . It is nevertheless worthwhile to note that when these conditions developed certain officials took initiatives in bringing about a change in leadership such as would yield a change in policy. They fell in five broad categories: ministers and civil servants mainly concerned with domestic affairs; officials whose business was evaluating foreign intelligence and forecasting the future;

officials concerned with internal security; military officers who were rivals of those responsible for the prior conduct of the war; and party functionaries hoping somehow to secure their own futures." He makes no mention of bombing here.

22. John Gooch, ed., *Airpower: Theory and Practice* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass and Co., 1995), 85.

23. Richard Szafranski, "A Theory of Information Warfare: Preparing for 2010." Available from <http://www.cdar.af.mil/apj/szfran.html>.

24. Craven and Cate, 464.

25. Stephen Harvey, "The Italian Effort and the Strategic Bombing of Italy," *History* 70, 1985, 41-42.

26. *Ibid.*, 45.

27. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89.

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